



YOGIC PRACTICES

## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### WE CAN CULTIVATE SATTVA BY:

Letting students know the *potential* benefits of practices, and encouraging them to use the practices outside the yoga class to self-regulate

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### WE CAN CULTIVATE SATTVA BY:

Avoid or provide psychoeducation about practices that have the potential to be triggering or imbalancing for students

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Practices that are helpful in cultivating sattva for those experiencing depression, anxiety, trauma and stress, regardless of which *guṇa* is predominant

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## ĀSANA FOR SATTVA



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### ĀSANA:

Co-ordinating movement to the breath (not the other way around)



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### ĀSANA:

Emphasis on inhabiting the body, sensing and noticing what's unfolding in the body during movement and while holding āsanas



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### ĀSANA:

Vīrabhadrāsana (warrior poses) to embody strength and grounding



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### ĀSANA:

Balancing postures (e.g. vṛkṣāsana) to feel strong and stabilise the mind



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR ĀSANA:

Students with a history of trauma may be triggered by intense physical āsanās

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR ĀSANA:

Avoid sounding controlling as this can be triggering and encourage students to override their instincts

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR ĀSANA:

Avoid using yoga straps in your classes and avoid teaching in a studio that has ropes or yoga straps hanging from the wall

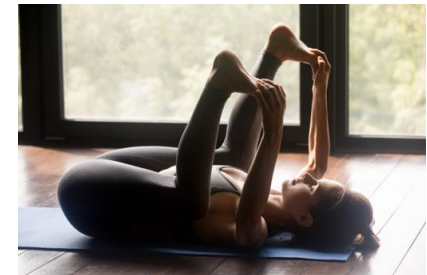


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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

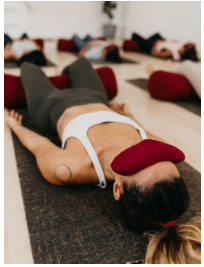
### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR ĀSANA:

Happy baby pose can be triggering for some people, especially if they have had an experience of sexual abuse



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR ĀSANA:

Śavāsana can be a time for rumination for students, so keep śavāsana short (around 5 minutes) or include a guided meditation practice rather than lying in silence

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## PRĀṄĀYĀMA FOR SATTVA



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

*“Many of our patients are barely aware of their breath, so learning to focus on the in and out breath, to notice whether the breath was fast or slow, and to count breaths in some poses can be a significant accomplishment.”*

van der Kolk

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### PRĀṄĀYĀMA:

Sensing the breath just as it is, without trying to fix or change anything



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**

Listening to  
the breath



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**

Noticing and  
sensing the  
breath moving in  
the body



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**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**

Abdominal or  
diaphragmatic  
breathing



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



### PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Regulating the  
breath to be  
calm and steady

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

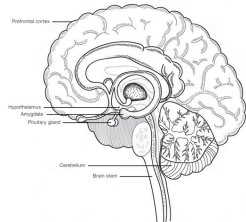
**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Sama vritti  
prāṇāyāma  
(equal breathing)



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM



Inhalation engages SNS  
Exhalation engages PNS

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Sama vritti  
prāṇāyāma  
(equal breathing)



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Coherent  
breathing



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Nāḍī sodhana  
prāṇāyāma  
(alternate nostril  
breathing)



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

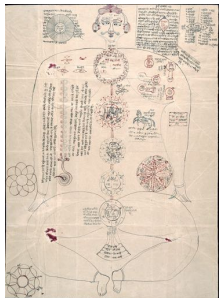


PLATE 1.

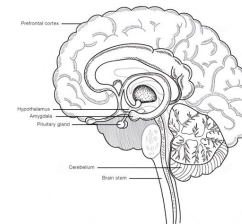
Wellcome Collection



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM



Left nostril and PNS  
Right nostril and SNS

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Nāḍī sodhana  
prāṇāyāma  
(alternate nostril  
breathing)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma  
(humming bee breath)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Chanting

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



**PRĀṆĀYĀMA:**  
Chanting

Ganesh Mohan

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Prāṇāyāma can be triggering and counterproductive if it's not taught sensitively and with authentic encouragement to adapt or cease the practice at any time

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Never insist on your students closing their eyes as this can be triggering and unsafe



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

To reduce the likelihood of an abreaction, start very gently and build up over a period of time, with focus on the breath being comfortable and easy, without force

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Only hold the breath if the student can breathe in and out fully and only if the breath retention does not disturb the breath

T.K.V. Desikachar

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Let your students know that if they begin to feel uncomfortable or dizzy, that they should cease the practice and breathe naturally

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

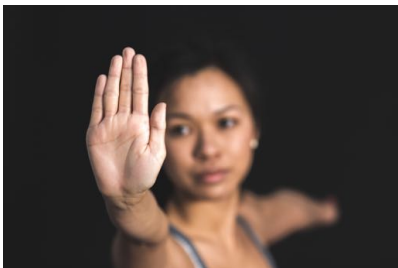
### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Breathing through their nose is not comfortable or possible for all students



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA



### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Avoid sounding controlling

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### PRĀṆĀYĀMA:

Keep it simple, there is no need for fancy techniques



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## MEDITATION FOR SATTVA



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**MEDITATION:**  
Engage the mind with a guided mindfulness meditation practice



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**GUIDED MEDITATION:**

- iRest meditation
- Yoga nidra
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Body scan
- Visualisations
- Gratitude
- Self compassion
- Counting the breath
- Prāṇāyāma practices



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**MEDITATION:**  
Other ways to engage the mind include chanting om, another mantra or song or listening to music

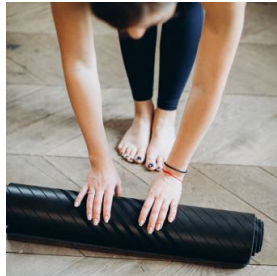


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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### MEDITATION:

Active meditations such as sensing the body during āsana or walking meditation



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### MEDITATION:

Emptying the mind  
Inhale welcome contents of the mind, exhale empty the mind, in the pause after the exhalation rest in the emptiness



Saraswathi Vasudevan

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### MEDITATION:

Keep the meditations short, give the mind something to focus on, and let students know how long the practice will be

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

Individuals experiencing depression, anxiety, trauma and stress often have a very active mind, and if you don't give their minds something to focus on, they may ruminate, have anxious or depressive thoughts, feel triggered by their internal experience and/or feel restless

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

Always introduce meditation as optional and remember that āsana and prāṇāyāma can be a meditation



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

Never insist on eyes being closed as this could feel unsafe or be triggering



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

Meditation can be harmful if it is not taught appropriately, sensitively and to the needs of the individual student

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

Meditation has the potential to precipitate psychosis, exacerbate obsessive and schizoid traits, and release a debilitating flood of painful emotion in some seriously unwell individuals

McGee (2008)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

*Consider 'to whom,  
for what symptom,  
in what form, in what dose,  
and for how long?'*

McGee (2008)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

*'The patient must not be psychotic or have too severe a character disorder, so as to avoid any psychiatric complications. Indications for meditation include the treatment of depression, anger, anxiety, stress, hypertension, addiction, insomnia, and chronic pain. Given its effects on awareness of self and others, availability and tolerance of affect, and ability to inhibit action, meditation is also a useful practice for patients with neuroses and mild to moderately severe character disorders who are plagued by defensiveness, lack of self awareness, vulnerability to intense and painful affects, and self-destructive behaviors. If applied intelligently, meditation can help those who are sufficiently motivated to practice.'*

McGee (2008)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

*'Like a drug, meditation must be prescribed with careful attention to the psychological status of the patient'*

McGee (2008)

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

If you are working with a population with serious mental health issues, avoid teaching meditation unless you have specialist skills in this area

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

If you have a student in a general yoga class whom you know has serious mental health issues, invite them to try other alternatives

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MEDITATION:

In a general yoga class, if meditation is taught within the suggested guidelines, in a thoughtful and sensitive way, is always presented as optional, and you hold a safe and compassionate container for your students, then the likelihood of harm is minimal

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## SANKALPA BHÂVÂNA

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Sankalpa =  
'a resolution to make a difference'

Bhâvâna =  
'a heartfelt attitude that is held with the  
entire body and mind'

Richard Miller

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Sankalpa bhâvâna =  
'wholehearted intention'

Richard Miller

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Invite your students to set an intention at the beginning of the class, and ask them to check back in with it at the end

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### **INTENTIONS HELP TO:**

Support your students to check in with their needs in that moment

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### **INTENTIONS HELP TO:**

Promote conscious action in alignment with those needs

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### **INTENTIONS HELP TO:**

Cultivate a sense of  
self-responsibility

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### **INTENTIONS HELP TO:**

Cultivate a sense of agency

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Supporting your students to tune into  
their own needs, to set an intention  
based on those needs, and to make  
choices in alignment with the intention  
in class can help

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### **AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS:**

*"I invite you now to take a moment to set an intention for yourself for this class. Perhaps consider how you'd like to feel during and as a result of the class. Perhaps 'I practise in a way that is gentle and compassionate', or 'I am strong and confident' or simply 'I am present'. There's no right or wrong way of doing this, simply stating your intention for your practice to yourself, feeling how it feels in your body, then set it free."*

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### AT THE END OF CLASS:

*“And as we’re lying here in śavāsana,  
you might like to gently and compassionately state  
your intention again silently to yourself  
..... (pause as the students do this) .....  
and notice if another intention arises  
for the rest of your day.”*

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

### THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Positive language  
Present tense  
Concise and clear

Richard Miller

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Model intentions that are not  
just about positive mood states

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## TEACHING THEMES



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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Self-compassion

Gratitude

Strong and gentle at the same time

Sthira sukam āsanam (YS II.46)

Meeting yourself where you are

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

Finding a place of balance and stillness within

Trusting the needs of your body

Ahimsā

Noticing the state of the guṇas and  
consciously cultivating sattva

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## POETRY

YOGIC PRACTICES

## CULTIVATING SATTVA

WILD GEESE

by Mary Oliver

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

Always We Hope Someone Else Has the  
Answer - Lao Tzu  
Birthright - Danna Faulds  
A Blessing - John O'Donohue  
Blessing in the Chaos - Jan L Richardson

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**POETRY:**

Chickpea to Cook - Rumi  
Everything is Waiting for You - David Whyte  
For Longing - John O'Donohue  
From Out of the Cave - Joyce Sutphen

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

The Guest House - Rumi  
How to Open Your Heart - Jeff Foster  
If Abandonment is the Core Wound - Jeff Foster  
Instructions - Rudy Francisco

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

The Journey - David Whyte  
The Journey - Mary Oliver  
Learning Life - Catherine Garland  
Love After Love - Derek Walcott

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

The One-Inch Journey - Wendell Berry  
The Patience of Ordinary Things - Pat Schneider  
The Peace of Wild Things - Wendell Berry  
The Question - Rumi

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

Sometimes - Sheenagh Pugh  
Start Close In - David Whyte  
The Summer Day - Mary Oliver  
There Is a Brokenness - Rashani Réa

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

**POETRY:**

Trust - Thomas R. Smith  
Wild Geese - Mary Oliver  
The Word - Tony Hoagland  
The World Has Need of You - Ellen Bass  
Yes - Rudy Francisco

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## CULTIVATING SATTVA

A BLESSING  
by John O'Donohue

T H A N K   Y O U

