

turn your world upside down

by paige wyatt

photography by jasper johal

handstand
(adho mukha vrksasana)



who

I love yoga, and I love to help people find the beauty in themselves and in their practice. I have deep respect for our planet and have for many years felt helpless against the forces that are adversely affecting it. Yoga has helped me to shift that feeling. One day I woke up and realized that if I could show people that there was another way to live, we might have a chance at reversing the direction of earth's decline.

I practiced gymnastics very seriously when I was young. My practice fed me in so many ways; I loved the control and connection I had to my body. Through my twenties, I lost a great deal of that connection to a body I was once deeply in touch with. My practice, and my work with Ana Forrest, began a process of reconnection and healing that continues today. I've started to rediscover the joy of moving my body that I experienced as a child.

why

Going upside down makes me feel free and grounded at the same time. It helps me find my center and boosts my energy. When I'm feeling listless or my energy is frenetic, I'll pop up into a handstand, letting the energy flow back into my torso and my brain. Handstands can brighten your spirit. The next time you're down or tired, kick upside down and feel your body and your breath. Let the energy flow through you.

how

Be sure you are completely warmed up. To learn to move fluidly into handstand, you begin by teaching your muscles the effects of gravity. Hands on the floor a little wider than your shoulders, looking straight down, fingers spread as wide as possible. Lift one leg, standing leg bent, begin making little hops on your exhale. Press the hands into the floor using the core muscles. Feel the effects of gravity on your body. I notice immediate changes in students when they practice

this way. Once upside down, keep your feet active, toes spread with a deep ujjayi breath. Lengthen your tailbone toward the ceiling, reducing compression in your low back. Practicing against the wall, lift up and out of your shoulders and let your neck relax. Without the wall, look down between your hands, squeezing your inner legs together.

For handstand-splits variation, start with your hands one leg's distance from the wall. Kick up on an exhale, extending one leg toward the wall. Reach your thighs away from one another. Practice this variation on both sides. For a second variation—twisted root—start with hands an inch or two away from the wall. Make your way upside down. Bring one leg in front of the other and bend the knees slightly, wrapping the top leg around the bottom leg into twisted root. Tuck the top foot behind the bottom ankle and lift up in the side body and the shoulders, keeping the glutes contracted. Put these variations together for an impressive sequence!

paigewyatt.com

CIIS