

In yoga there are postures (asanas) and counter postures that are designed to work together. We move our body one way and then move in an opposing posture to calm the body and nervous system. This way we can connect with our core, our mid-line energy situated along the spine.

One example of this is when we do a back bending posture; afterwards, we will often want to move into a forward bend to counter balance the pose. This is because backbends can be stimulating to the body, squeezing the organs in the opposite direction than usual. Using forward bends re-balances the body and energy, generating a sense of pampering closure and relief. This is why we often want to reverse the sensations created by one pose with a counter pose.

Counterposes are very logical. Back bends balance forward bends and vice versa. Right balances left. Internal rotation of the hips balances external rotations. Twists can be used to balance almost any pose involving the spine.

When we feel over-stimulated, it makes the other poses seem more challenging and it may become more difficult to find the calming effortlessness of a pose. One way of achieving balance and “pacification” is to counterbalance poses for improving flexibility (dynamic sequences of postures) with strengthening poses (static postures).

We can also counter a pose by reversing the exertion required for an Asana. An example is when doing any pose that generates heat, physical or emotional, in the body; we may want to lower our head and heart. At any point during a yoga session or practice, you can stop and move into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog), Savasana (Corpse pose), Balasana (Child’s Pose), or Viparita Karani Mudra (Inversion posture Mudra). These four poses are all potentially calming to the nervous system after the more invigorating heat generating poses.

Lets let the body just rest between poses, especially if the pose was a very deep one. Our body will probably overrule any ego-driven urge to quickly move into another, more challenging pose. Lets respect the body's wishes and lets take our time between the postures.

Counter poses help neutralise a trying or pushing attitude and we can return to the beginner mind again and approach the poses more gently. Taking deep breaths in the counter pose will sharpen our concentration and allow the body to settle deeper into the pose.

We can apply the same principle to our daily life. For most of us, our whole lives are consumed with constant movement and noise: the conversations, obligations and responsibilities, emails and phone calls, external and internal voices, electronics – all of this noise inevitably wears on us and makes us weary, like a tiresome forward-arching spine at the end of a long day. After preparing the vehicle (our body) with asanas (postures) and breathing exercises (pranayama), we may experience Silence in relaxation and/or meditation as a counter-posture to all this busyness. Creating space for uninterrupted silent reflection. is more necessary for our spiritual and emotional wholeness than we might think.

