

# RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS



&

# EXERCISE



# Rheumatoid Arthritis & Exercise

Let's talk about rheumatoid arthritis. It can be, very painful. You get random pain throughout the body.

I teach a Fusion of yoga, Pilates and meditation and I have one particular client in mind right now when speaking about her journey with rheumatoid arthritis.

She was 24 and started suffering from random pain.

She didn't know why, but didn't do anything about it initially.



After 5 or 6 years of having random pain, she decided to have a blood test and the blood tests showed that she had rheumatoid arthritis.

**The pain is so random, it's not all the time. Sometimes it'll be a pain in the arm, or pain in the leg or pain in the shoulders and sometimes pain free. But as the person ages, the pain increases.**

One of the most important things to do is keep moving your body. This particular client is now 74 years old, so she has lived with this for all those years and she has been coming to see me as a client now for the last 8 years.



**She says that the one thing that helps her is movement.**

She had to stop some of the other movements she had been doing.

She had to stop working as she was an emergency nurse, which would have been incredibly difficult with the pain she would have been suffering at certain times.

As much as she loved it, she had to give up her work and she is still an incredibly bright, wonderful woman and very passionate. I think the way she thinks is also very positive for her.



In an email she said, “Without these movements, I know that my suffering would be far worse”.

The doctors have said to her that she's actually quite incredible, the way she's able to do just about everything.

She even walked on the Camino walk about 18 months ago. She went off to Spain and did that walk, which I think is an absolutely incredible achievement for anyone, let alone somebody suffering from rheumatoid arthritis!

**What Does She Do To Help Her Rheumatoid Arthritis?**



## Work Within Her Boundaries

When she comes into the class, she always goes to the back of the room with a wall behind her because there are times that she is not able to balance very well. (I always start with some balancing or integrating your body, coming into the room, being present to the environment, and being aware of your body, so I get people to close their eyes).

She doesn't always close her eyes because she feels a little unbalanced.

**If she does, she knows she will be alright as the wall makes her feel safe.**



This is really important because she's maintaining balance with the exercises that I give her in class.

## Easy Balance Exercises With Progression Are

1. Standing on one foot
2. Standing on one foot trying to lift one leg slightly off the floor
3. Standing on one foot trying to lift one leg slightly off the floor and alternating from side to side while being aware of your centre and your balance.



I talk about visualising the crown of your head to the ceiling, feeling tall and engaging your core.

Now, she does all of those exercises, and then she gets down on the floor and she does the core work.

She does the movement on each side of the body.

She said she loves the back work called swimming.

**Swimming helps to restore balance in the spine and at the same time engages the core.**



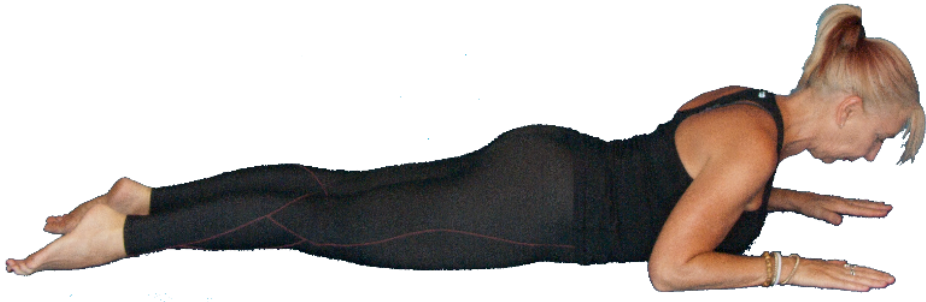


## **Swan Dive Prep & Swimming For Spinal Balance & Abdominal Strength.**

**This is a strengthening cardio exercise and will aid Asthma Symptoms by opening lungs through the breathing pattern while supporting the respiratory system and also aids general posture and balance.**

Swan Dive can be done at a modified level right to a very advanced level that includes rocking. I will be only doing a Swan Dive Prep which is modified as we are also leading into further spinal strengthening with Yoga Modified Bow Pose.





This strengthens the entire spinal muscles while it is also an excellent counter stretch from the side lifts and forward flexion exercises as it opens the chest, stretches the abdominals, hips and quadriceps. It is also similar to the yoga pose called Cobra or Mini Cobra (Salabhasana).

This pose counteracts the forward bending exercises and balances the spine, chest, and shoulders after sitting in a slouched position, such as desk/computer work, for an extended period of time.

Great for evening classes.



- Begin by lying face down on the mat with your arms in an L shape with your hands next to your shoulders and shoulders are away from the ears.
- The legs are hip width apart and can be parallel or turned out slightly.
- Inhale and engage abdominals on the exhale as though you are lifting your belly button off the mat.

Keep the abdominals engaged with a feeling of lifted throughout the exercise which protects the lumbar spine.



- Inhale again and lengthen your spine and on the exhale press your arms to the mat and lift the upper body keeping the neck lengthened and the hips and legs on the mat.
- Inhale again and as you exhale release the lift and lengthen your spine as you return your upper body to the mat. Repeat 3-5 times and then lift 1 leg at a time for 4 and if the back is feeling strong and supported lift both legs and arms off the mat.
- This then moves into swimming alternating 1 leg and opposite arm either from the floor or in the air again depending on core strength and stability.



This balances the spinal muscles as it works across the back while developing control from the prone or face down position.

- Lengthen arms in front and inhale maintaining a stable pelvis as you exhale lengthen and lift alternate legs from the floor while lifting and lengthen alternate arms. This can also be done lifting both legs and arms from the floor and alternating in the air, but the torso must remain stable without swinging from side to side. Repeat 3-5 times.
- Rest taking the arms down the side of the body and turning the head to one side stretching the neck and then to the other side.



So she will do that and there are times that she's not able to do this exercise and we give her another alternative. She brings her hands to the sides, or maybe she just moves her legs.

Regardless of her rheumatoid arthritis, she does continue to move the entire class, to the point that most of the time I just see her as capable of doing everything.

She will tell me that there were certain things that she found hard, but she did continue to move.

**BE INTUITIVE & LISTEN TO YOUR BODY**





That's probably the most important part of helping yourself live with rheumatoid arthritis.

She is on a lot of medication and there's a lot of alternative medication too, so that is something to consider if you have rheumatoid arthritis to discuss with your health practitioner to work out the right balance for you.

**My client is doing a mixture of medication, and she's also doing alternatives with fish oil etc.**

**She said it keeps her feeling lubricated.**





In a class we work the whole body. We work the front, side, back, we do standing postures and finding balance.

Working on the flow of movement, moving shoulders, moving arms and one of the things I do in all my classes now, particularly as people get older is a little bit cardio work.

We put on some cool music so clients can move themselves around.

My client with rheumatoid arthritis doesn't move as well as some of the others but she certainly does it and she loves it.



She said, "I love when you get that dance music on and I can feel my body starting to move and my heart rate increase a little bit" so it's really, really good for her.

Another thing I do in a class, (it is really important for people with rheumatoid arthritis) when working on the floor is to find a comfortable position. You may like a bolster under your knees if you feel like your back is hurting.

**Get into a position that suits your body and don't try to do what others in the class are doing.**



## Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is called the waking sleep and if you're in a state of anxiety, within 5 minutes, you can actually calm right down. Yoga Nidra works through the body relaxing each part of the body, focusing on that part and letting go and relaxing. Thoughts will cross your mind and it doesn't matter, just let them go.

## Intention

Yoga Nidra is so helpful for my client. She always adds intention. Her intention is always that she wants to feel better and then she sees herself feeling better.



So then I say, "Say your intention to yourself. See what it looks like to be pain free, feel what it feels like to be pain free and make it happen".

She said, "By saying those things to herself, she sees herself being a lot more comfortable and feeling a lot freer".

**THE POWER OF INTENTION IS VERY  
STRONG IN HEALING YOUR BODY**



**I have been doing this for very long time, my firm belief is you can do a balance of movement for so many different disorders or diseases and I know for a fact that rheumatoid arthritis is helped by moving your body.**

I hope you find some relief in these suggestions.

**This Ebook is a collaboration between Jill Healy-Quintard, Yoga Teacher at bodyandbalance & Global Healing Exchange**

