

Yoga for Dance Gypsies!

by Anna Rain

Summer is a comin' in, and a whole bunch of us will be traveling to and participating in music and dance camps, for long weekends or full weeks. How can we care for our structural selves in these soul-filling and body-challenging spaces? This column is short on specific actions and long on photos and suggestions.

Try some of these body openers at home; take the ones that resonate for you on the road with you. You know your body best—if you're trying anything new, be attentive as to how your body reacts and proceed carefully. Avoid pain; embrace and explore discomfort. Any small care you show your body has the potential to help you dance longer—not only longer into the small hours of the night, but also longer into the years ahead.

Many of these ideas are “common sense,” ones that you may have heard before. When you nod in recognition upon reading them, take them seriously—common sense is only useful when employed! If these ideas are not part of your regular body care, add a few in. Help your body feel better doing what your heart loves.

Air Travel Reminders

- get enough sleep in the days leading up to your trip
- minimize stress in getting to the airport; leave plenty of time; have your transportation to the airport all figured out well before the day of travel
- hydrate! drink a cup of water for every hour you are in an airport or in an airplane
- use the time in the gate while waiting for a few poses (see photos below and above right)
- most airlines have a list of recommended stretches in the in-flight magazines; look them up and do them

Poses for Air Travel



SIT ON HEELS—take shoes off; use a sweater/coat between hips and heels, OR under shins, OR behind knees (as pictured) if you need extra support. Benefits—refreshes legs, supports healthy knee flexion, aligns ankles, rests heart.

EDGE OF CHAIR FORWARD BEND—sit on edge of chair; take knees wide and move feet away from chair; fold forward from hips; reach for floor. Benefits—opens hips; relaxes shoulders.



INTERLOCKING FINGERS-BEHIND-BACK—interlock fingers and pull wrists down; roll shoulders back; change interlock so other thumb is on top. Benefits—opens chest and shoulders.



MESSAGE BASE OF SKULL—sit back in chair; take fingers to base of skull; tip head back and support skull with fingers; pull head away from shoulders; massage neck and base of skull. Benefits—relieves neck tension.



Car Travel Reminders

- your right leg takes extra stress when driving; stop at least every two hours to give your body a break
- hydrate! drink a cup of water for every hour you are on the road
- focus on what you know to be safe driving and keep your focus on the tasks of driving
- choose the atmosphere that makes you happiest—listening to music; listening to podcasts/radio; singing!

Poses for Car Travel

ARM/BACK/LEG EXTENSION ON BENCH BACK OR BENCH SEAT—turn fingers out; roll arms out; step feet back; separate feet and take heels away from each other; press top thighs back to pull hips away from waist; move dorsal spine toward ground. Benefits—stretches hamstrings, shoulders, upper back.





ONE FOOT UP ON BENCH OR CAR BUMPER—put one foot up on support; keep other leg straight and engaged; drop torso between legs. Benefits—opens hips; stretches hamstrings.

PIECE OF SWIM NOODLE IN UPPER BACK—help upper back move forward to open chest with swim



noodle *along* spine, above waist OR *across* spine, at bottom tip of shoulder blades. Benefits—assists spinal muscles in building capacity to be upright and lifted.

Camp Body-Care Reminders

- allow yourself rest periods and time for sleep
- pay attention to your own needs in terms of time-with-people and time alone
- hydrate! drink a cup of water for every hour that you are awake (see Anna’s Magic Hydration Solution below for even *better* hydration—like natural, homemade Gatorade)

Poses for Camp



Cool down at end of session with gentle stretching, including ankle circles (both directions on each foot) and this **ANKLE AND UPPER BACK CHALLENGE**—heels slightly apart; bend at ankle, knee, hip (don’t tip or tuck pelvis); roll shoulders back and lift chest. Benefits—challenges ankles; stretches calves; opens chest.



SQUAT WITH HEEL AND KNEE SUPPORT—heels on book, heels slightly apart; tuck blanket/towel/sweater behind knee pits; lift chest. Benefits—supports healthy knee flexion; strengthens ankles.

CALVES ON CHAIR/BED—lie on floor (adjust shoulder blades so they are as flat as possible); calves on support; thigh bones close to vertical; small support under head if needed to keep neck soft and chin toward throat. Benefits—rests low back; refreshes legs.



BACK OVER ROLL—roll firm blanket (~2-5” diameter roll); bottom tip of shoulder blades on roll; hips on floor [the lighting makes it look like mine are lifted; they aren’t!]; legs bent and feet on floor OR legs crossed (change which shin is in front halfway through). Benefits—opens chest; if legs crossed, opens hips.



Anna Rain is a Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher (CIYT). Her yoga practice is part of what supports her dance addiction. Thanks to Adelaide-the-Outback for modeling; thanks to the generous photographer, Arthur McNair, for filling all the holes in the long list of photos.



Anna’s Magic Hydration Solution—one to two tablespoons honey; 1/2 teaspoon salt (preferably mineral); 1 Zinger tea bag (optional). Add about 1/4 cup hot water and steep 2-5 minutes.

Add juice of one orange/lemon/lime. Add this mix to 1 quart of water. Drink and feel rejuvenated! (I make this regularly at dance camps, sometimes substituting lemonade—if available—for the honey and citrus.)

Thank You, MCC

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Take Anna’s advice with you on your travels this summer! You can download a PDF of this article, and others in this issue, at <http://www.cdss.org/programs/cdss-news-publications/cdss-news>.