

to look at them in the postures; long-term practitioners have shown to put on less weight over 10 years because they were good at resisting cravings.

Forward bends also help regulate appetite and want if you practice those where the legs are straight, lengthening the hamstrings and creating good vagal tone; this helps our ability to self-soothe when things get over stimulating. Bend your knees whenever you need though; straining the lower back is never helpful.

Backbends

Backbends lengthen the front of the body and contract the back, the opposite motion to much modern postural habits where we hunch over desks and computers. Even simply arching from the bottom of your ribs up through a long neck, to open your chest, can create an opening in the heart and breath that can make us feel we have the energy and strength to resist cravings.

Backbends that are done as part of a well-sequenced class, allowing build up and releasing down of the muscle groups involved, can ultimately help strengthen our lower backs and encourage better postural habits whilst moving and sitting in life. This helps our whole bodies respond to stress with more resilience, strengthening our abilities to stand tall and walk away gracefully from that tempting cake.

Three poses to help when cravings strike:

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana – Bridge Pose

This pose is a clever back bend that helps position the neck and shoulders to release, areas where we can keenly feel the effects of stress and feel locked in to our responses. It can feel rather intense when we come from a place of tension, so watch you don't grip the breath and fully release into the sensations. The strength needed to sustain the pose can help redirect attention from cravings, but also show us how we need to keep soft in the breath, eyes and jaw to be able to be with those strong sensations and not introduce more stress. Breathing up on the inhalation and down on the exhalation can produce a wave-like motion through the spine and take up focus we may be giving to cravings.

Viparita Karani – Waterfall Practice aka 'Legs Up The Wall'

This restorative backbend works best when we raise the hips above the heart, creating a supported backbend with full chest opening and opening at the base of the skull that creates self-soothing through the calming vagus nerve. As you lie and allow the blood to flow back easily to head and heart, this pose can help release the excitatory state that craving produces.

Balasana – Child Pose

Child pose is the ultimate resting forward bend to come back to anytime and catch up with your breath and curl into the safety of a foetal position, where the 'unsafe' signals of stress that prompt cravings can be soothed. The brain is calmed from tipping the head forward and naturally energised from gentle pressure on the forehead. This means that *balasana* can be used as a nourishing rest-stop between poses for anywhere from 10 seconds to a minute or as a restorative pose in its own right at the relaxing end portion of a practice. ॐ

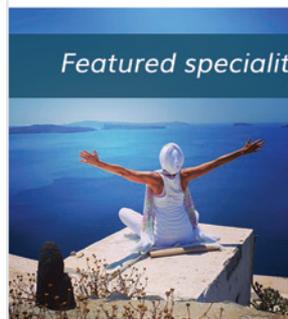
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