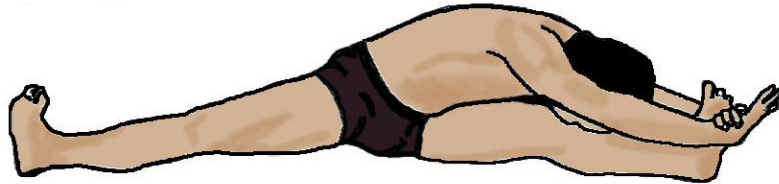


*Live Free or Die Trying*

# MY STRETCHING SEQUENCE



*Ghislain Bonneau-2004*

## **MY STRETCHING SEQUENCE**

*By Ghislain Bonneau-2004*

Know from the start that I have been involved with many different Martial Arts during all my life and all those different Martial Art had their own way of warming up and stretching. Those Martial Arts included, BOXING, JUDO, KARATE, and TAE KWON DO. I did some tournaments and I even won a Canadian Championship in Tae Kwon Do, back in 1986. Later on I started to do Yoga while always learning new ways to do a better stretching sequence. What follows is the accumulation of all that I have learned from those Martial Arts, and including Yoga and then I gradually added my own stretching moves and perfected my Stretching Sequence in the right order to what it is here today. It is very important to do your stretching sequence in the correct order because one stretch will prepare part of your body for the next body part and you want to warm-up your lower back before you do any other stretch if you want your Stretching Sequence to be more effective and to minimize the risk of injury. So this Stretching Sequence is in the best order that can be and that will provide you with a safe and great stretching experience that you will always want to keep as your own. Later on with more experience you might want to add your own moves and adjust it to fit your own personal needs. To avoid injury you must try to keep it in the same order as explained here. Don't worry if at first you find it difficult, it's normal and you will have to be patient before you start to see some progress, but the more you will do it and the better you will feel. If you never did any Stretching Exercises your body will have to adapt to this new stress. Yes it will be stressing for your tendons and muscles and you will feel them a bit sensitive the next day and this is normal because as long as you will stretch you will always feel a little sensitivity the next day, unless you have reached a point where you are so flexible that when you do your stretching exercises your muscles and tendons don't even have to stretch to get you there. This is what we want to aim for and it is a lot of work to get there, but it is so much worth the time and effort you will put into it. As you will see it's not the goal that is important, it's the road to get there that is worth taking. If you don't feel a thing the next day it means that you did not stretch enough. If it hurts too much, well it should not hurt at all, you should just feel some sensitivity in the region you stretched and that is normal. Don't over do it, listen to your body, it will let you know if you did too much, or not enough.

### **WHY SHOULD YOU DO STRETCHING EXERCISES ?.**

Stretching has many beneficial effects on the human body. Just in case you are not aware of this, STRETCHING your muscles helps your body to eliminate FREE RADICALS out of your system. Stretching also makes your muscles 25 % stronger for their size, by creating quality muscles that are denser and more flexible. Stretching also help to warm up your muscles before any kind of exercises and help to prevent injury. Free Radicals are like residue left over from the process of eating and absorbing proteins and making new cells and muscle fibers in your body. All your cells in your Body contain more or less Free Radicals and it is comparable to what Carbon would be to a motor in a car. You must give your engine a good burn out from time to time to clean all the carbon inside your engine. The body works in a similar way and exercising and stretching your muscles will help you to remove most of the FREE RADICALS in your body. Exercise is good for that, but stretching is most effective in removing FREE RADICALS. The problem is that if you don't stretch or exercise you will age much faster then if you do STRETCH and EXERCISE. Every cells of your body are copied and replaced from time to time and this happens everyday. Not all the cells are replaced everyday but Millions are. Eventually after a week you have a brand new skin. To do this the cells duplicates themselves, they make and exact copy of themselves and then the old cell dies out and the new cell takes its place. If all the cells of your body contain FREE RADICALS it is also copied over to the new cell. The next time if there is more FREE RADICALS in your cells the next copy will be more and more degraded, to a point where the free radicals take over the place of your DNA and the cells wont be able to do their function anymore and the organ that they are part of, will eventually fail and you will die. It is as simple as that. It's like a photocopier machine making a copy from the previous copy, and the subsequent copies are always made from their previous copy.

So if every time your body make a new copy of your cells full of FREE RADICALS, you use the last copy that is degraded, and every time the quality of the copy will be degraded faster. So you must exercise and STRETCH your muscles to keep your cells healthy and free of FREE RADICALS so that when they make a copy of themselves they are clean and without any FREE RADICALS. This is how important it is to STRETCH AND EXERCISE and not many people know this.

**AND SO, NOW YOU KNOW, AND NOW YOU DON'T HAVE ANYMORE EXCUSES.**

Along with exercises Free Radicals can be kept in check by good eating habits. But just Good Eating Habits alone won't do it and exercise is a must to stay young and healthy. Here is a list of Fruits and Vegetables that are high in Antioxidants to help to Eliminate Free Radicals out of your System.

**Fruit:** Blueberries, Cherries, Kiwis, Oranges, Pink Grapefruit, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Red Grapes, Raspberries, Strawberries.

**Vegetables:** Alfalfa Sprouts, Aubergine, Beetroot, Broccoli, Corn, Kale, Onions, Red peppers, Spinach, Sprouts.

**HERE IS WHAT YOU WILL LEARN AND DO IN THIS STRETCHING SEQUENCE.**

**1-LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT STRETCHING METHODS.**

**2-MY STRETCHING PROCEDURE. (The Three Steps)**

**3-WARNINGS.**

**4-WARM-UPS.**

**5-MY HIP ROUTINE.**

**6-MY STRETCHING SEQUENCE.**

**7-MY RELAXATION METHOD.**

**1-STRETCHING METHODS**

There are many forms of stretching methods that have their own benefits and reasons to be and they can be split into TWO different groups. Static Stretching, and Dynamic Stretching.

**1-STATIC STRETCHING.**

2-Soft Stretching.

3-Tension Stretching.

4-Power Stretching.

2-3 and 4 are all forms of STATIC STRETCHING.

**5-DYNAMIC STRETCHING.**

Dynamic stretching would involve a movement of your arms, or legs in a swinging motion.

Do not do those if you don't know how to do them. Here I will only speak of Static Stretching.

**1-Soft STATIC STRETCHING; (Always do this before your warm-ups)**

It is important that you do some soft static stretching before performing any kind of Warm-Ups or Stretches to reduce the risk of injury. Here is some examples.

**1**-Standing up with your feet at shoulder width, close your fists (not too tight) and twist both of them at the wrist in a circular motion, first 10 times in one direction and then the other.

**2**-Hold your arms up at shoulder level with elbows bent and your fist near your chest, make a circular motion with your shoulders. This is to warm-up your shoulders and upper back muscles. 10 Times.

**3**-Then with arms fully extended and fingers pointing outward at shoulder height on both side make about 10 small circular motion forward and then backward.

**4-**Put your hands on your hips with your legs spaced at shoulder width and twist your middle body about 10 times in each direction. Your head should stay in place aligned with your feet.

**5-**Stand on one leg and twist your ankles do both directions 10 times and then twist at the knee making a big circle with your foot.

**6-**Now keep your hands on your hips and slowly tilt your head to the left, feel a stretch but don't over do it, just put a very gradual tension then release slowly and then do the other side.

**7-**Turn your head to the left as far as it will go until you feel a tension and then hold for 5 seconds and do the right side.

**8-**Now tilt your head up and look at the ceiling while stretching your neck from the clavicle to the chin. Then bring your head down until you chin touched your chest and hold for 5 seconds feeling a stretch in the back of your neck.

**9-**Making a circular motion with the head is very dangerous so do it very slowly and do not put any pressure or tension or stretch in any direction while doing it. Do it very loosely and relaxed. Do three head twist in both directions.

**10-**Another Pre-Warm-Up Exercise that you can do.

Lay down on the floor and stretch your arms over your head and your legs as far as they will go and at the same time elongating your spine as much as possible while keeping your back to the floor. Breathe out and make a cavity with your abdomens relaxing your abs muscles. Do not arch your back always keep it as straight as possible.

Lots of people do this instinctively in their bed before they get up and do anything else. Lock your arms and legs as straight as can be while pointing your fingers and toes away from your body and start slowly to push out in both directions and hold the position 6 to 10 seconds breathing out slowly and then release the stretch very slowly.

Make sure your back is not arched, always keep your back flat on the bed or on the floor, by twisting your pelvis upward and lift your legs and arms up just a couple of inches. Your back should feel the stretch all the way from your upper back down to your lower back and this will make you feel very good. You will feel like a blood rush going through all your body. Do this three times in a row and you will feel very relaxed afterward. Your static stretching is now completed and now you would be ready to do some WARM UP EXERCISES.

### **TENSION STRETCHING; (This is the type of stretching you will do in my Stretching Sequence)**

This method uses either a partner, or another part of your body, or your own body weight to stretch a particular part of your body like you would do in Yoga poses. Some of the YOGA poses are for balance, others for flexibility of the joints and others are simply for stretching muscles and tendons or even all of those at the same time. All my stretching moves here are for stretching tendons, muscles and for flexibility of the joints only, so none of them are for balance. In this type of stretching you must also enter the stretch very slowly and breathing out at the same time and relax the part that you are stretching and **come back out of the stretch very slowly.**

### **POWER STRETCHING;**

Make sure that you start very slowly and finish very slowly as well for this kind of stretching, because this is very important with this form of stretching. To do power stretching you must have an immovable object from which you will pull with your arms. If I want to do a power stretch of my arms I extend one arm out at shoulder height but I do not lock the elbow open all the way, I make sure there is a little bend on the elbow and I stand beside a wall with the palm of my hand flat on the wall and by twisting my body I push the wall with my hand and therefore creating a tension on the tendons and muscles of the arm and shoulder but not at the joint of the elbow and this also stretches the biceps muscles. Don't forget to start to put tension on your arm very slowly and hold the maximum tension that you can do for about 5 seconds and release the tension very slowly. For my shoulder and pectorals I hold the vertical bars on each side of me like the ones they have on a squat cage or a wide bench press bench with my arms stretched out on both sides with my elbows bent. I pull slowly on the bar towards the center of my chest with my arms until I reach the maximum that I can pull and



I hold this position for 5 seconds and then I slowly release the tension. You can also join your hands like in a prayer position in front of your chest. You must push in with both hands at the same time as much as you can and when you have reached maximum tension you start moving your hands out slowly away from you in a straight line at about mid chest level and gradually remove the tension as your hand is moving further and further away until there is no more tension. This really works the pectorals and also the shoulders.

Another position for the shoulder would be to sit at the end of a flat bench and leave just enough space for one of your hand to grab firmly the under side of the bench and pull upward. Twist your torso to have your shoulder and arm straight and aligned with your grip but keep your back straight and put the other hand on your lap. Again start to pull upward very slowly and hold the stretch for 5 seconds and finish very slowly. Then do the same for the other side. When I do my Resistance training, between my sets, I do power stretch only the muscle group that I am working on. This kind of stretching helps to develop denser and stronger muscles.

I do my **TENSION STRETCHING SEQUENCE** on the off days between my RESISTANCE TRAINING sessions, and I do some Yoga stretching about once a week on weekends

---

## **2-STRETCHING PROCEDURE** **(MY Three Step Technique).**

When stretching never, never, never, use your body weight to swing yourself into a stretch; **always go into your stretch very slowly** in three Consecutives Steps. This means that when you do a stretch first for **STEP-1** take a breath in at about 60% of your lung capacity and then while slowly exhaling do a first stretch very slowly as far as you can go and stop before it hurts, hold that position for 5 seconds while breathing in again at 60% of your lungs capacity (do not come back up to swing back down) you must keep the SAME position you have reached at every steps. **STEP-2** exhale slowly while stretching further more and **hold the position** again for 5 seconds while breathing in again, then **STEP-3** stretch more as far as you can go while exhaling slowly and stop stretching before it hurts and **hold that last position for 25 seconds**. It is on the third stretch that you will get more stretch and go further and beyond the position you did that same stretch the last time. Every time you will do this routine you will improve, not by much, by very little, but every time you stretch you will go further and further into the stretch. Note that in any stretch you should never bent your back to go further in the stretch, your back should always be straight and you should only bend at the waist or the hip depending on the stretch you are doing but never bend from the back.

Each time as you breath out and go down, visualize the tendons and muscles you are stretching and in your mind say, **LET GO**, you must tell your muscles that it is **OK** to relax and to **LET GO** if you want to have a good stretch. Muscles are naturally tenses and tight when you stretch because it is a natural mechanism that holds you back from over stretching to protect you from injury. So when you stretch you must let your muscles know that it is **OK** to **LET GO** because **you are stretching with control**. Men have more muscles mass then women so it is much difficult for a men to stretch and to be flexible, and the only way that men can be more flexible is to stretch with this technique of the three STEPS with breathing in and out and the **LET GO** in your mind to always relax the muscles you are stretching.

Always do the 3 breathing in, and breathing out techniques for all your stretching exercises with the 5 seconds intervals in between each STEPS and always hold the third stretch for **25 seconds** and most of all don't forget to think **LET GO** and to relax those muscles. Stretching is not something you must do in a hurry, it should be done with a very relax attitude so give yourself lots of time to do it. **DON'T RUSH IT** and your Stretching Sequence will become a very relaxing experience for you. Put on some very relaxing music before your start and long enough so you wont have to stop your routine to put more music. The session should last about 20 to 30 minutes including the Soft Static Stretch, the Warm-Ups, the Stretching Sequence and the Relaxing Routine at the end.

### **3-<< WARNINGS >>**

**IF YOU ARE NOT SURE OF ANY EXERCISES IN THIS ESSAY, JUST CONTACT ME, OR ASK A YOGA TRAINER TO HELP YOU. IT'S BETTER TO DO IT RIGHT, THEN TO RISK INJURY.**

**I can not be held responsible for your actions, you are the only judge if you can do it or not.**

Realize that nobody is the same and so **never compare yourself to others and never try to go as far as others can go**, just work at your own pace and do what you can without hurting yourself. Stretching should not hurt; you must always stop to stretch if it starts to hurt. What you want to do here is gently stretch the tendons and the muscles of your body, **NOT** strain or rip them apart. So you must not go as far as where it will hurt, you must stop before that critical point. It is the holding time of **25 seconds** at the end of the third step that will give you a good stretch, not passing beyond the point of your safe maximum stretch. If it hurts it's because you have stretched too far, in this case ease back very slowly and relax. Listen to your body and work with it, not against it. Your muscle will feel sensitive the next day but don't worry this is normal, but they should not hurt, if they hurt you went too far into your stretching, doing some aerobic exercise the next day like jumping jacks or juggling on the spot will help to relax your aching muscles or just go out for a nice walk to the park and get a friend to give you a good massage. Only do this stretching routine every two days or so, you must not do this every consecutive day. Like with Resistance Training you **MUST** let the body rest at least one day before redoing this Stretching Routine again. For beginners do this stretching routine only every two or three days until you feel more comfortable with this routine and that your muscles don't hurt as much the next day. Don't expect to do your stretch perfectly and all the way the first time as explained here, be patient and give yourself time to get there. It might take three to five years before you succeed to reach the maximum stretch and do a perfect split. Some people never do reach that point, and can never do a full split because of the way their hip is sitting, but it is not important how far you can stretch, what is important is to stretch just as far as **YOU** can go and a little bit more each time. The benefit of stretching will still be there no matter how far you can stretch. The important thing is to **JUST DO IT** and stretching will make you feel very relaxed and you will feel good with yourself.

### **4-WARM-UPS**

**(Do number 1 or 2 with number 3.)**

**1-WARM UPS: JUMPING JACKS, ABOUT 50 will do just fine.**

Start standing up with both legs together with both arms on each side of your body. Jump up while spreading your legs a bit wider than shoulder width while bringing your arms up over your head and let both palms of your hands clap together at the same time that you touch the floor with your feet apart. Do not let your heel touch the floor, only use the ball of your feet to do the jump. Jump back up while you bring your legs back together and your hands should touch both sides of your legs as the ball of your feet retouch the floor side by side. You have completed one JUMPING JACK, now you only have 49 to go. Count when your hands touch on each side of your legs.

**2-JUGGING ON THE SPOT FOR 2 MINUTES**, while bringing your knees as high as your waistline on each step. When JUGGING either on the spot, or on a machine or outside always land your foot on the ball of your feet, never on the heel.

Once you have completed your warm-ups, your muscles are warmer and elastic. Immediately following your warm-up, do the following Hip Routine below.

**3-FORWARD BEND TWIST.** For this one spread your feet double shoulder width and with your legs lock (do not bend the knees) twist to the left and touch your left ankle with your right hand, and get up half way up and down again twisting to the right and touching your right ankle with your left hand. Keep your back as straight as possible. Go up half way again while twisting to the left to touch your left ankle with your right hand. Keep your abs in and tight and use your abs and side muscles and hips to twist, **do not twist only using your back muscles. It is not important at first if you can't touch your opposite ankle, just go as far as you can go without over stretching. This is only a warm-up exercise and not a stretching exercise, so do it slowly with control. If you never done this, it is possible that you get dizzy at first. Just do what you can and don't forget to breathe.**

## 5-MY HIP ROUTINE:

It is very important to do a HIP routine before doing any other kind of Stretching. This will allow for more flexibility at the Hip joints and will help to get more stretch out of your Stretching Routine.

Stand up and do 10 hip twist in both direction before you start.

**1-HIP PUSH-UPS;** Spread your legs to a 3/4 split position with both hands on the floor wider than shoulder width at about 3 feet in front of you, keeping your back straight move your body down and forward bringing your buttocks down as low as possible keeping your leg straits in a split position and at the end of the forward motion bring up your head and upper body high with arms fully open and elbows lock while keeping your buttocks as low as possible. Now bring back your body by bringing your buttocks up high and pass your legs, and then lower your buttocks again forward going into another forward motion for another HIP Push-up. Do 10 of this continuously in a row without stopping. This will oil the joints of your HIPS and you will feel a sensitivity in your hip joints, and this is normal, if it is the first time you do this kind of push ups, the next day you will feel your hip a little soar and you might need to go out for a walk to ease the stiffness or do a lot of hip twist.

### **KNEE TO THE SHOULDER:**

**2-**Laying on your back with the head up looking at your feet, bring your left knee up to your shoulder while keeping the other leg straight and on the floor. Exhale and hold your knee in position with both hands as close to your shoulder as possible for about 10 seconds. Do the right legs in the same manner.

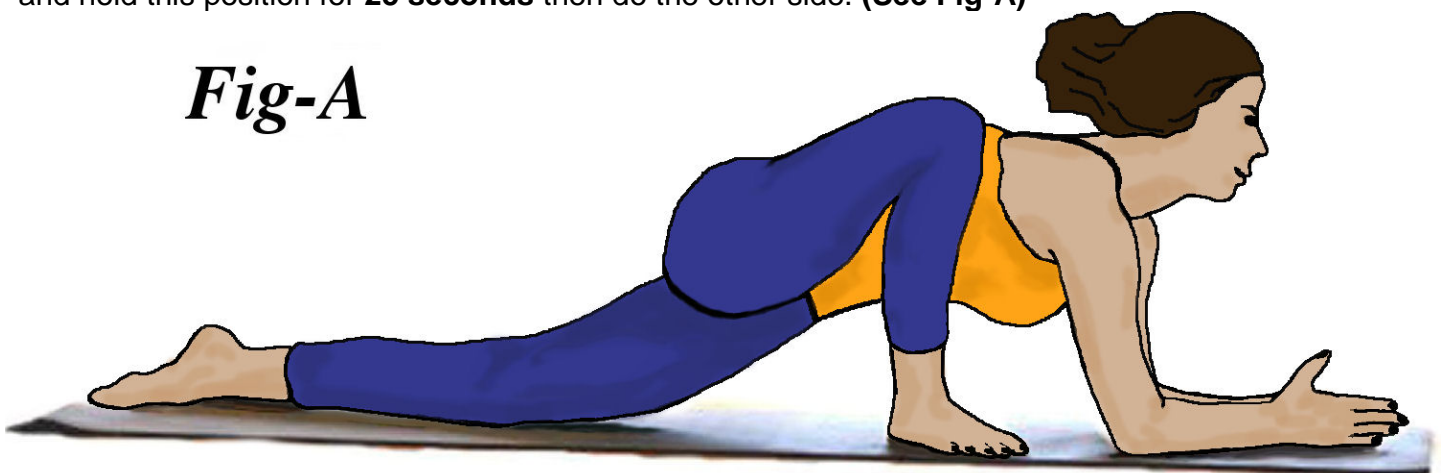
### **HALF LOTUS LEG PRESS:**

**3-**Laying on your back bring both knees up keeping your feet flat on the ground. Lift up the left foot and cross it over the right knee and bring your left foot on your right lap close to your waist. Hold the foot with your right hand and with the left hand press gently on your left leg pushing it away from you. Keep your head up and hold for about 5 seconds. Release slowly and do it again and press a little more and the third time hold for **25 seconds** and then do the same with the right leg.

### **YOGA LIZARD POSE: (Utthan Pristhasana)**

**4-**From a Yoga Downward facing Dog position, step the right foot to the outside of the right hand and turn the right toes out slightly but always keep the foot flat on the floor. Come down onto your elbows and keep the head up looking forward to keep the spine straight. If it is too difficult with the left leg extended put your left knee on the mat. Use the weight of your body to go down as far as you can and hold this position for **25 seconds** then do the other side. (See Fig-A)

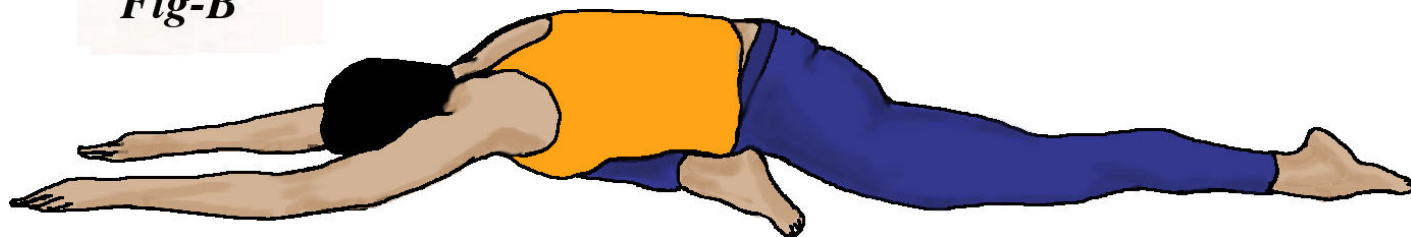
*Fig-A*



## YOGA PIGEON POSE: (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana)

5-From a Yoga Downward Facing Dog position, bring the right leg up into a Downdog split. Bend the right knee and swing the leg in and forward bringing the right knee outside the right hand while releasing the top of the left leg to the floor. Square the Hips towards the floor and you can use padding under the hip to bring the hip square. Bring the torso down into a forward bend over the right leg and let the weight of your body rest on the right leg. Extend your arms forward and hold the position for **25 seconds**. Breath out as you go into this movement and ease out slowly back to do the other side in the same manner. (See Fig-B)

*Fig-B*



### LOWER ABS WARM-UP:

6-Lay on your back and put your hands on each side of your buttocks with palms down on the floor, keep your head up, looking at your feet and do a circular bicycle motion with your feet. Do this for about two minutes.

### LOWER ABS EXERCISE:

7-Bring in your stomach in and tighten your abs muscles while laying down on the floor as above with your hands on each side of your buttocks and your head raised, leave one leg one inch from the floor and raise the other one high above your body at almost a 90 degree angle and always keeping your leg straight, then lower the leg close to the floor without touching it and raise it again. Do 10 repetitions on each sides. Do not swing the leg up; only use your abs muscles to raise the leg.

8-Stand up and do 5 to 10 hip twist on both sides, and then shake your arms and legs, and now you are ready for some serious stretching.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 6-MY TENSION STRETCHING SEQUENCE:

**Before you start MY TENSION STRETCHING SEQUENCE, make sure you did the Soft Static Stretching, Warm-ups, and the HIP ROUTINE above.**

### ARM STRETCH: (Stretching the arms and Side Muscles)

9-Standing up: With legs shoulder width, stretch your arms up over your head and hold your hands together with reverse palms, facing the ceiling. Pull the arm up gently and very slowly with the hand that hold the other hand, and tilt your body a little bit to the opposite or right side if you are stretching the left arm to give a better stretch, hold for **10 seconds** then change hand and do the other arm.( do both sides twice). You should feel a good stretch from your arm all the way down to your side muscles.



## **SIDE STRETCH: (Stretching the side muscles and lower back)**

**10-Standing up:** Spread your legs to double shoulder width, then bend your upper body down sideways to the left very slowly, bent from the waist while sliding your left hand on the outside of your left leg to have a better control. Keep the other arm straight up at starting position and while doing a half circle to finish with the right arm horizontally to the left with the palm of your hand facing an imaginary wall on your left and fingers pointing towards the ceiling. Push out with that hand as if there was a wall. Do the **THREE STEPS Technique**, and on the last hold for **10 seconds**. Then come back up very slowly and do the same procedure on the right side. Do both side twice alternatively.

## **WIDE UPPER DOG VARIATION: (Stretching Abductors, Inner legs tendons and muscles)**

**11-Place** your feet at double shoulder width distance and bend down forward from the waist very slowly while bringing both of your palms on the floor (shoulder width) about 2 to 3 feet in front of you. Keep your arms straight and hold this position for about 30 seconds giving the time of your lower back and legs muscles and tendons to feel the stretch and to relax. Think LET GO and relax while you hold that position for 10 seconds.

**12-Spread** your feet a little more apart and move your hands slowly further out in front of you and hold again for 10 seconds while relaxing your muscles.

**13-Spread** your feet a little more but this time bring your elbows down on the floor resting the weight of your upper body on your forearms and put your hands together and sit your head between them. Hold that position for 25 seconds.

**14-Keeping** the same bent position spread your feet as much as you can while keeping your under foot flat on the floor and bring your elbows back slowly about one feet towards you and hold again for 25 seconds.

**15-Keep** your forearm flat on the floor all the time. Bring your forearm back a little more and hold again for 25 seconds.

**16-Keep** your forearm flat on the floor while you split your legs slowly at your maximum split and hold this position for 25 seconds.

## **STRETCHING LOWER BACK & HAMSTRINGS: (Tendons and Muscles behind the legs)**

**17-From** that same last position above, lift up your elbows and put your hands palms down on the floor just in front of you (about one feet away) while keeping your back as straight as possible, bring your feet back together very slowly lifting your buttocks in the process and bring your leg straight while always keeping your hands on the floor until your feet are back together and your hands on each side of your feet.

This is called **Standing Forward Bend Pose**. (See Fig-1 below.) For beginners just go up as far as you can go without bending your knees or removing your hands from the floor, and hold your maximum position for **25 seconds**.

You must try to always keep your legs straight, do not bend the knees. Bent from the waist keeping the back as straight as possible and hold that position for 25 sec. Don't forget to relax and LET GO. After 25 seconds stand up very slowly and shake your legs and your arms on each side of your body and relax while doing this for about 30 seconds.



## STRETCHING: (QUADRICEPS AND LEG TENDONS)

**18-**Standing position with legs in a 1/3 split position and bring your upper body down with your head close to your left knee. Put your left hand on your left ankle and the other hand on your left knee pushing it backward to prevent the leg from bending. Do the Three Steps to go down further and hold the third position for 25 seconds and do the same procedure on the other side.

**19-**Now spread your legs to a ½ split position and do the same procedure again, on both side.

**20-**Go to your maximum split position while always keeping your feet flat on the floor and do the head to the knee again, on both sides. Do the THREE STEPS to go down further each time.

**21-**After this last split, keep the split position and bring your upper body up while you put one hand in front of you and the other behind you for balance and control and go down again into a full split with heels on the floor this time and hold your maximum position for **25 seconds** while you LET GO and relax.

**22-**Now let your buttocks down on the floor while staying in a full split position with your body straight up facing forward and your hands resting on your hips. Keep this position until you feel that your tendons are loosening. At this point you can hammer your abductors muscles gently for about 2 minutes with the inside of a closed fist or a knife hand from the knee to the groin and back to the knee to make the abductor muscles and tendons relax more. Do both side at the same time.

**23-**Keeping the same position, **FULL SPLIT STRETCH-1-** Slide the left arm on your left leg and let your body down over your left leg until your forehead rest on your left knee or as close as you can. Don't forget to bend at the waist only, keeping the back as straight as possible. You might be tempted to bend your back to go further but this would not be a stretch. It's better to keep the back straight and to go only as far as you can for the stretch to be more effective. For now just try to hold your big toe with the left hand and do the THREE STEPS counts 5 seconds in between and hold 25 seconds at the end.

*Fig-2*



**24-FULL SPLIT STRETCH-2-** Do both side again, but this time, do a Full Wide Angle Seated Side Bend with both of your hands past and over your left feet. (See Fig-2 above)

**25-FULL SPLIT STRETCH-3-** For the third split twist your body to pass your left arm over your left leg and put the palm of your left hand under your left foot and this time bend sideways resting your side in front of your leg rather than your chest and bring your right hand over your head and hold your big toe with the right hand. So this time you are bended sideways and for SPLIT 1 & 2 your chest was resting on you leg. I know that for somebody that never stretch that this will be impossible to do, for a good while, so just do stretch 1 and 2 above and use the three STEP techniques as explained in the important note above to reach your maximum stretch while always keeping your back straight as can be. Later maybe in a year or two you will be able to do stretch-3. This is why you stretch, it's because you are not flexible. I am just telling you what we want to achieve even if you can't reach it right now, at least you will know what to aim for. Everybody are flexible when you are born and you loose that flexibility gradually if you don't keep stretching. So if you never stretched for the last 30 or 40 years, give yourself lots of time to go back to where you should be.

## WIDE ANGLE SEATED FORWARD BEND:

**26-**Stay in a full split position with your upper body straight up and facing ahead of you and with both hands palm down on the floor in front of you, slide your hands forward as far as you can go and bring your upper body down forward while always keeping your full split and your hands flat on the floor. Keep your back straight as much as possible and go down as far as you can or until your chest rest on the floor. Do not bend your back to try to go down further. It is not important to go down further if you have to bend your back to do so. What is important is to always keep your back straight and bent from the **HIP**. So **DO NOT CURL THE BACK, never in any stretching exercise**, always keep your back as straight as possible. After you have reached your maximum forward bend, hold that position for 5 seconds, do the **THREE STEP techniques** to go down further a second time hold for 5 seconds and the third time hold for **25 seconds**.

*Fig-3*



**27-**Go back up very slowly until your body is upright and stay seated on the floor while sliding your legs slowly to the front of you until they are only one feet apart. You might have to help your legs to move in together. Shake your legs for a minute or so to bring your tendons and muscles to their normal position. This shaking will feel really good and get the blood circulating.

## HIPS AND LOWER BACK:

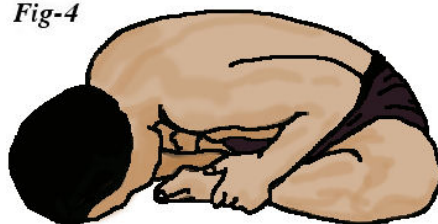
**28-From a seated position**, bring the underside of your feet together towards you like in a Yoga Cowboy's Pose and bring your feet to about 1 feet in front of you. You don't want your feet to be too close to you for this stretch.

**29-**To warm up your hips; bring your knees up and down while holding your feet with your hands for about 20 times.

**30-**Now put your hands or elbows on your knees and press down slowly and gently on each knees at the same time to begin your stretch. You can also do each side separately to bring the knee down further while trying to keep the other knee as low as possible with the other hand.

**31-**Now slide your feet out forward a little more and hold your feet again with your hands, and bring your upper body down forward until your forehead touch your feet like in a **Yoga Cowboy's forward bend Pose**, while still holding your feet with your hands together and hold that position for **25 seconds**. For beginners do the three STEP techniques as explained earlier. Don't forget to keep your back straight, bend only at the hip. **(See Fig-4 below)**

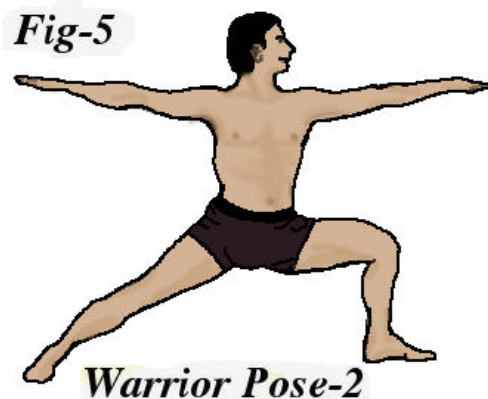
*Fig-4*



**32-** Go to a standing up position and shake your legs for a minute and then hold your hip with your hands on each side of your body and twist your hip in a circular manner, about 10 times in each directions.

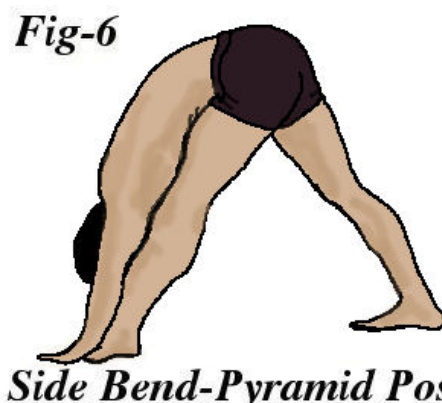
**STRETCHING THE QUADRICEPS & GLUTEUS;** (muscles and tendons behind your leg & buttocks)  
**WARRIOR POSE-2**

**33-**Go into a Yoga Warrior pose 2 on the left side and hold for **20 seconds** (See Fig-5)



**SIDE BEND (Pyramid Pose)**

**34-**From the warrior position bring your upper body up both legs straight and twist your torso facing your left side and bring both arms up over your head and hold hands together palms open and facing the left side while bending your body down slowly from the waist until your forehead touch your left knee and both hands either at your ankle or on the floor while always keeping both legs straight. **SIDE BEND (See Fig-6)** For beginners instead of bringing your hand up before you bend down slide your hands on your left leg on the way down for a better control. Hold for **20 seconds**.



**(DO NOT BENT THE KNEES)** You will feel a good stretch behind your knee and the back of your leg and also in your glut muscles. In this case the left leg. I know you won't be able to go that far the first time so just do what you can and use the three STEP technique to go down further. Do the same thing on the right side. When both side bend are completed stand up straight and shake your legs and do 10 hip twist on each side.

**35-**Now take a standing wide leg position and go down and do a full split again as far as you can go with both heels on the floor and hold for **10 seconds** with one hand in the front and one in the back. Put your buttocks on the floor to finish the split and repeat step **26** above and then go to step **36** below.

**SEATED FORWARD BEND:** (See Fig-7)

**36-** Bring your legs in front of you and shake them for a little while. Now bend your upper body forward down until you can grab both of your big toes and hold, do the **THREE STEPS** and hold the last one for **25 seconds**. Your goal here will be to go down far enough to be able to put your hands under your feet crossing your fingers like in a prayer position with your head resting on your knees. You might not be able to get there for a little while. Just be patient, it will gradually come to you.



Afterward stand up slowly and shake your arms and legs and do 5 hip twists on each side.

CONGRATULATIONS, you have completed My Tension Stretching Routine.

As you can see I kept the most difficult part for last, so that your body would be well warmed up to prevent any risk of injury.

Now you would be ready to begin either, a Judo, a Boxing, a Karate or a Tae Kwon Do class.

\* \* \* \* \*



For beginners (for the first year) go directly to the RELAXING ROUTINE BELOW. For more advanced people if you want to stretch a little more just REDO step **11 to 36 above** and then go down to the RELAXING ROUTINE BELOW.

This relaxing routine is part of the stretching routine above and **MUST BE DONE** at the end before going on with your day. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**, because this relaxing routine once completed will make you feel more relaxed for all the rest of your day. Don't forget that if you are just beginning to do Stretching exercises that it can be very stressful for your muscles and tendons. If you skip it and go on with your day your muscles will be stressed and cramped all day long and you might even feel VERY HYPER (not relaxed) and your muscles will hurt much more the next day.

### **7-MY RELAXING ROUTINE:**

Lie down on your back in a (Yoga CORPS POSE) with both hands at your side with either palms up or down and relax. Find the most relaxing position that will permit all your muscles of your body to have no tension at all. Empty your head of all thought or stress and do not think about anything except your breathing and your muscles. Take three breath in, very slowly by the nose at about 80% of your lung capacity and breath out **very slowly** by the mouth with your lips very close together making a little hissing sound to restrict the air to go out too fast. Breathe out until your lungs are completely empty and then slowly breathe in again. As you let the air out of your mouth visualize it as if it was not air but tension and stress going out of you and relax. After the three big breaths are completed just breathe in normally and do the following.

Visualize all the muscles of your body from your feet to your head being covered very slowly by an advancing white cloud coming over you from your feet up, and while the white cloud passes slowly over each part of your body just visualize that part and let all tension go completely from that muscle and go up to the next one until you have reached your head. As you let go of each muscles you should not feel anything anymore from that part of your body that is now covered by the white cloud, they should feel like they don't exist anymore. Here is the order that I do my body parts.

**1-Both feet. 2-Both Calf muscles. 3-Knees. 4-Quadriceps. 5-Buttocks. 6-Lower Back. 7-Middle Back. 8-Hands. 9-Forearms. 10-Elbows. 11-Biceps 12-Upper Back. 13-Shoulders. 14-Neck. 15-Head.**

**16-Face Muscles.**

When you have reached the Face Muscles relax all the muscles in your face and visualize a trap door opening on your forehead and let all tensions and stress go out of it and then close that door and lock it up.

This means that you won't let stress reenter your body for the rest of the day. While breathing normally stay in that relaxed position for **only 3 minutes NOT MORE** while letting the vision of the white cloud dissipating very slowly and be replaced by a bright blue sky. You must not fall asleep from that state of relaxation and position.

Then get up and walk around your place while moving your arms and shoulders up and down and being and feeling very relaxed and well. If you have a partner a good massage is in order after the relaxing routine. If you are alone like me, a hot bath and a leg massage with a massage lotion or a good skin lotion will do.

**CONGRATULATIONS, YOU HAVE JUST COMPLETED MY STRETCHING SEQUENCE.**

\* \* \* \* \*

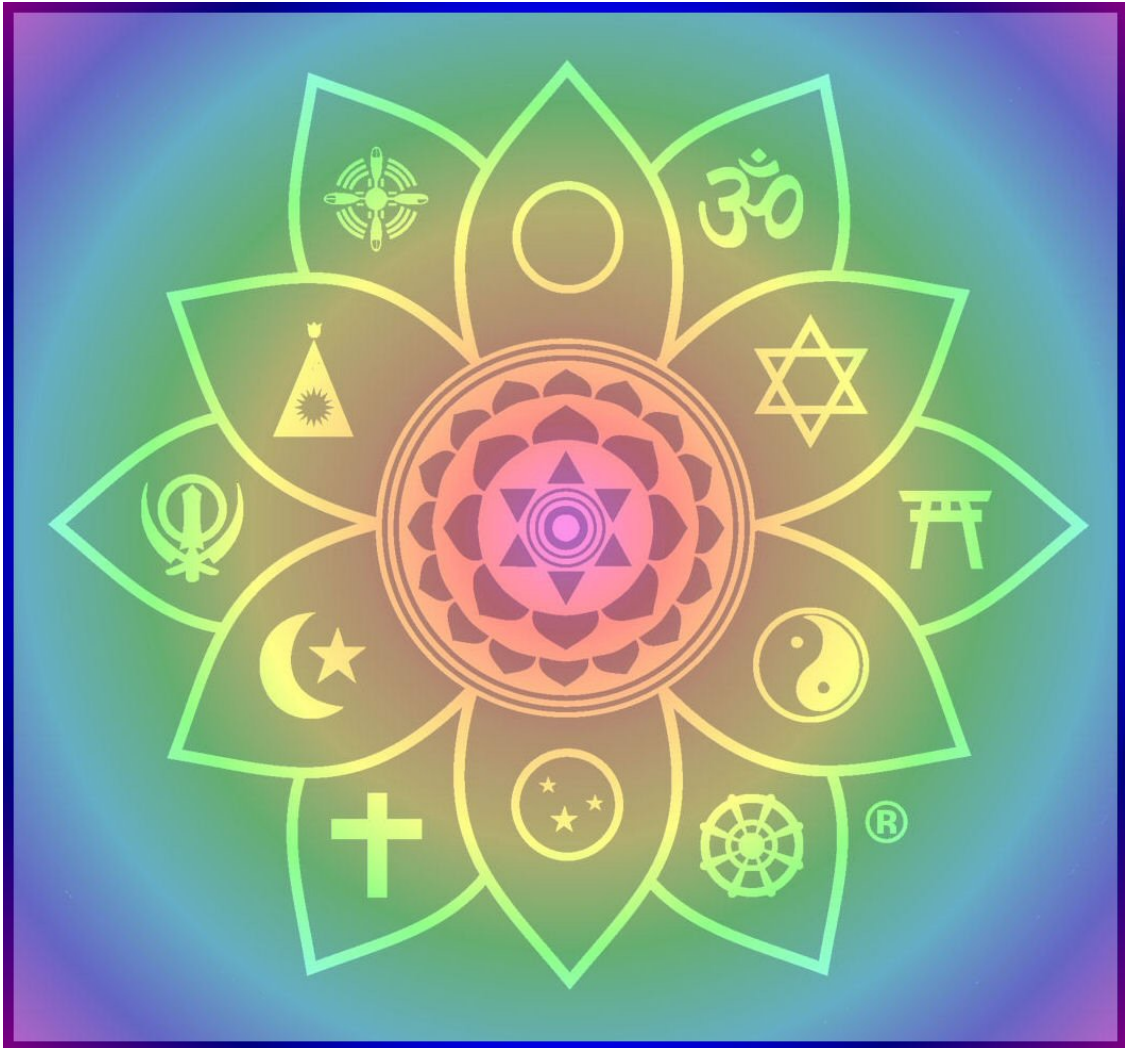
**FOR PEOPLE HAVING TROUBLE TO FIND THEIR SLEEP.**

My Relaxing Routine above can be done in your bed just before you sleep, this will help you to find your sleep, but **DO NOT GO TO SLEEP FROM THAT STATE OF MIND**. You can lay down under your bed sheet to do it but keep your arms above the sheets on each side of your body.

First you must empty your mind of all thought and stress of the day and only visualize the white cloud. The white cloud act like a soft blanket and is there to help you to stay focus and forget everything else and to visualize your position as you go up your body.

After you have closed the door on your forehead and that you have relaxed for 3 minutes shake your arms, legs and your body a little bit and go into your favorite sleeping position with an empty mind and void of any thought or stress from your day. After the relaxing routine is completed do not start to think about your problems or anything else, just go to sleep immediately. Know that the night is for sleeping not thinking. You have all your next day to think while you are awake. Most people can't find their sleep because they think too much and they let their stress of the day haunt and disturb their sleep. With this relaxing routine you will experience the best sleep you ever had of your life. And you can do this every night before going to sleep, it only take 2 to 3 minutes.

---



**YANTRA;** *These symbols appear on the outermost petals of the Yantra and are the visible indication of the deepest teaching of H.H.Sri Swami Satchidananda that “**Truth is one, Paths are Many.**” They represent the twelve faith on the altars in the upper sanctuary of the LOTUS. These altars circle and connect to the central altar honoring the One Light. Close examination of the faiths of the world reveals their basic unity. The structural core of every religion is some form of prayer or communion with the Devine, combined with love and service to fellow beings. The essence of every religion is an experience of the heart. Since all paths lead to the same goal, let each individual choose and follow any roads that lead to the light of GOD AND HIS TRUTH.*

By Ghislain Bonneau, 2004 (Revised 2012-07-25)

[gbonneau@gbphotodidactical.ca](mailto:gbonneau@gbphotodidactical.ca)