

LIFE FORCE ENERGIZATION EXERCISES ADVANCED PRACTICE GUIDELINES

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“Though the forms of some of the exercises may be commonly known, the simultaneous coordination of breathing, muscular tension, and direction of Life Energy through Will, constitutes the uniqueness of these exercises.”

—SWAMI YOGANANDA

While you are learning the Energization Exercises, it is best to focus only on the essential instructions as they are given in the video class and in the booklet, also in the Appendices for this Part. Once you are able to practice them easily, and have learned them by heart, you can consider the refinements given here below.

For those who already practice Energization regularly, these comments will help you have a deeper understanding and experience of them. Directing the flow of prana with specific intention and awareness increases the healing impact of the exercises.

Some of these comments come from Yogananda’s lessons, others from Swami Kriyananda’s writings, and yet others from notes I took in 1971 when Kriyananda instructed us in their proper practice. I also include some things I have learned about them during my fifty years of practice.



Reminders from Yogananda*

- Never forget that when you are tensing particular parts with Will, you are sending down fresh Life Energy from the brain to those parts and body cells – that you are recharging the body battery from the motor centers of the brain. Always feel this while doing the exercises. Through the power of Will the brain receives an increase supply of Life Energy from Cosmic Energy residing in and surrounding the body.
- Exercise very slowly, willingly and pleasantly, with eyes closed. By keeping the eyes closed, concentration is keener, and energy currents are prevented from escaping through the eyes.
- The *more slowly* the exercises are done, with *deliberate application of the Will Power* to the particular parts, the greater is the flow of Life Energy from the brain to those parts, and the more harmonious its coordination with the cellular energy of the tissues.
- Before doing the exercises, air the room as thoroughly as you can. In the winter close the windows if necessary before you begin.
- For specific cases of bodily ailments or for adjustment of special bodily parts, the number of times for particular exercises can be increased.
- While tensing and otherwise exercising body parts, and sending into them Life Energy through conscious Willing, never forget to awaken in yourself the deep reverential consciousness that you are trying to contact the Omnipotent Cosmic Spiritual Energy as vitalizing your body.

*Yogananda, Swami, *Yogoda Tissue Will system of Physical Perfection*, Boston, Massachusetts: Sat-Sanga, 1925.

Before you start

The invocation. Yogananda has given a number of “invocation prayers and affirmations” which can be offered before starting the practice. The principle behind all of them is to make a sincere effort to invoke the Intelligent Cosmic Energy, becoming its cooperating partner rather than presuming that it be at our behest. The invocation which is classically used by those associated with Ananda is this one:

Oh Infinite Spirit!
Recharge my body with Thy cosmic energy;
My mind with Thy concentration;
My soul with Thy ever-new joy.
Oh eternal youth of body and mind,
Abide within me forever, forever, forever!

The affirmation Yogananda used in his 1925 introduction to *Yogoda* is:

“O Eternal Energy! I awaken within me conscious will,
Conscious vitality,
Conscious health;
Goodwill to all, vitality to all, good health to all.”

Another one from his *Metaphysical Meditations*:*

“O Spirit, teach me to heal the body by recharging it with Thy Cosmic Energy,
to heal the mind by concentration and smiles,
and the soul by meditation-born intuition.

His Prayer-Demand in *Whispers from Eternity* for recharging the Body-Battery:

O Conscious, Cosmic Energy,
it is Thou who dost directly support my body.
Solid, liquid and gaseous foods are converted and spiritualized into energy
by Thy cosmic energy—and it supports my body.
Help me to learn, O Spirit, to live more and more by direct cosmic energy
and less and less by food.
Thine energy burns in the bulb of the senses.
I recharge myself with Thine omnipresent cosmic energy.†

Visualization. Standing straight, with your body relaxed and the weight evenly balanced between the left and right legs, close your eyes and try to imagine yourself surrounded by a sea of Cosmic Energy waves. Feel them as they lap against your body, looking for a way to get inside.

Now with the middle three fingers of each hand, press in at the medulla oblongata and strongly massage that area, in both directions. Relax the arms, and, breathing normally and consciously, imagine those energy waves entering through that doorway together with your inhalation, and being distributed throughout your body with the exhalation. After a few cycles, begin the Exercises.

* Yogananda, Swami, *Metaphysical Meditations*, Los Angeles, California: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1932.

† Yogananda, Swami, *Whispers from Eternity*, Edited by Swami Kriyananda. Nevada City, California: Crystal Clarity Publishers, 2008.

Remember

- Concentrate in the center of each body part being energized, while at the same time aware of the *flow* of energy that is coming through the medulla oblongata to that body part. *“It’s your concentration on the body part that will cause the energy to flow there, so that should be your primary focus. Keep your eyes physically focused at the third eye point, but your attention should be on the different body parts.”*—SWAMI KRIYANANDA
- *“The...exercises are all to be done slowly at first, gently and rhythmically. Never give jerks. Every movement must be harmonious...”* —PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA
- Give equal emphasis and time to both the tension and relaxation phases of each exercise.
- The “double breath” is an important component in many of the exercises, increasing the intake of oxygen and prana, and expelling toxins and carbon dioxide with the exhalation. Use the diaphragm to make both the inhalation and exhalation forceful.

Resistance exercises

There is a second way in which the “tense with will, relax and feel” technique is executed in these exercises. Rather than modulating the amount of tension in the muscles, the second modality begins with an already high level of tension which is maintained through the first part of the exercise, followed by the relaxation phase. These are resistance exercises, which health scientists recommend even for older adults in order to build strength, maintain bone density, and improve balance, coordination and mobility.

Resistance is created with imaginary weights or by creating resistance with the body itself.

Try these exercises which are part of the series.

Weight lifting to the shoulder

Start with the arms relaxed at your sides. Hold imaginary weights in your hands which are heavy enough to cause your arms to vibrate when lifting them.

Tense and vibrate the entire arms before starting to lift the weights, and maintain that level of tension while you bring the weights up to your shoulders.

Now relax momentarily, and then resume that level of tension as you lower the weights back down.

Do this several times, and then relax and feel the result.

Calf recharging

Imagine a heavy weight attached to your left ankle. Concentrating in the center of the calf muscle, tense and vibrate that muscle as you pull up the leg, raising the knee and bringing the heel towards the back of the thigh. Relax momentarily and resume the high level of tension as you push the lower leg and foot back down to the floor. Repeat several times and then relax and feel the results.



Comments for each exercise

1. Double breathing with palms touching. This is a warmup for the muscles, for the will and the concentration. As the wave of tension rises from the feet and reaches the arms, they are forcefully pulled open, against resistance, vibrating to their full extension. Hold for three counts and with the double exhalation return to the starting position, pausing briefly before doing the following repetitions. The spine is straight throughout and the arms straight as well.

2. Calf recharging. This is a resistance exercise with an imaginary heavy weight attached to the ankle. Concentrating in the center of that muscle group, tense high before pulling up the lower leg and knee, vibrating on the way up. Relax at the top of the movement, and then exert high tension and vibration as you push the leg back down the starting position. Do not swing the leg forward; bring it straight down, pause, then repeat.

3. Ankle rotation. With tension in the foot, ankle and calf, the weight still attached, slowly rotate the ankle with full-range motion and awareness. Very good for flexibility and mobility of the tendons and ligaments.

4. Calf and forearm recharging. This is a gradual tension and relaxation exercise. There should be no weight on the leg being recharged, thus it comes slightly forward with the weight on the back leg. Try to equally tense and relax both muscles, gradually increasing to high vibration and gradually releasing until complete relaxation. When doing the practice for both legs and arms together, for four muscles, try to tense and relax them equally.

5. Buttocks and chest. Uses the graduality mode of tension and relaxation. Try to tense and relax the parts equally. For women, concentrate well and vibrate strongly especially the chest and breast muscles, bring vital healing energy to

those parts. Yogananda: “To isolate and tense the chest muscles, in the beginning press the left arm a little at the left side when the left chest muscle is tensed. Do the same while tensing the right chest muscle.”

6. Back recharging. Also uses the graduality mode. The back harbors much tension; do this exercise slowly and consciously, giving each area full attention, with the full range of gradual tension, high vibration, and gradual relaxation.

7. Shoulder rotation. This is a resistance exercise. It is most effective when the elbows are pointing downwards and the hands on the top of the shoulders. Before moving the shoulders, they should be tensed and vibrating. The movement starts by bringing them up towards the ears, stretching back, still with tension, and then relaxing in the downward arc, in each direction. Do this slowly, consciously, with full range movement of the shoulder joints. This exercise relieves tension as well in the deltoid and trapezius muscles.

8. Throat and front of neck. Back to the graduality mode, and with deep concentration in the throat. This and the next two exercises favor the throat, vocal cords, the neck muscles and cervical vertebrae, and the thyroid. Do the central part many times, and then alternate left and right sides of the neck, always with complete tension and relaxation phases. Yogananda remarks: “The neck is the bridge between the brain and the body.”

9. Neck recharging. This is a resistance exercise. The starting position has the chin firmly pressed against the chest and a strong force tries to hold it there. With highly vibrating front neck muscles, the chin comes up and back, the muscles vibrating all the way, and then with complete relaxation the head comes forward, the chin back to the starting position. From Yogananda: “This exercise increases circulation in the brain, also memory and mental efficiency; it helps adjustment of the upper vertebrae.” It also continues the harmonizing effects on the thyroid gland.

10. Neck rotation. Kriyananda says: “Tense high the muscles inside and outside the neck. Make small circles if you can feel the tension; but larger circles are acceptable if you need them to feel the tension. The purpose is to strengthen the neck muscles so neck won’t go out of adjustment, and to adjust the cervical vertebrae. Rotate with high tension but without doing violence to your body. Then large circles without tension.”

11. Lower spinal adjustment. The resistance in this exercise is offered by the tense, straight spine and the tense, straight unmoving legs. Kriyananda says: “The spine remains aligned, serving as an axis around which hips and shoulders move. The hands remain below waist, with the arms almost straight down. The distance between hands doesn't change. To obtain the maximum torsion, twist the shoulders so that at one extreme of the movement the left hand is in front of the body with the right hand behind; at opposite extreme, the right hand in front, and the left hand is behind.”

12. Spinal rotation. The resistance is again offered by the tense spine, which is arched markedly backwards in order to feel tension in the lower back. Kriyananda says: “With the legs hip-width apart, bend forward with the back arched until you feel tension in low back. Keep the back tensed, and then with deliberate tension, rotate several times in one direction, relax a moment and rotate in the other direction.”

13. Lateral spinal stretching. The spine remains tense with the added resistance of an imaginary force trying to keep the spine straight. Kriyananda says: “Bend from side to side as against the spine's wish to remain vertical.” The lateral movements are small and require will in order to move the body. The head remains in alignment with spine.

14. Vertebrae adjustment. Kriyananda says: “Use the fists to push, in a steady and controlled manner, very firmly, with arms vibrating. Bring head back only a little on backward bend; come forward only a little on forward bend.”

15. Upper spinal adjustment. Resistance is supplied by tension in the legs, which are hip-width apart, and fixed; and tension in the spine.

16. Brain cell recharging. The next two exercises are very important ones for stimulating brain activities, promoting neurogenesis and plasticity, and helping to prevent neurodegenerative disorders.

The skull tapping should be vigorous, include the entire head and include the forehead, and be done for a considerable amount of time. Yogananda suggests this exercise also for improving the memory:

17. Scalp massage. While the previous exercise stimulates the head and brain cells, this exercise relaxes the tensions in the superficial fascia of the scalp. The fingertips should be firmly placed on the scalp so as to make this fascia mobile. Kriyananda: “Begin with hands on top. Move forward and back (with hands in position to draw two halves of skull apart), then side to side, then circularly in both directions. Then expand these circles outward to cover whole skull, ending in medulla region.”



18. Medulla massage. This is the point at which the astral body connects with the physical body and where Life Force enters the body. This exercise helps to open this contact point, permitting a greater flow of energy.

The resistance in this exercise is supplied by the strong pressure of the fingers inside the indentation at the base of the cranium during the massage phase and the head-lifting phase. Kriyananda says: "While still pressing in, pull head back with tension in arms (bring elbows back to accentuate tension). Hold this tension, and the pressure of fingers on medulla. Slowly relax forward (holding pressure at medulla). The purpose of the tension in the arms is only to maintain pressure on the medulla."

Yogananda: "*Bend head down, chin touching chest.* Touch the three middle finger tips of one hand with those of the other hand, then pressingly place these six fingers on the medulla. Give a circular massage from left to right, five times. Then keep the fingers well pressed on the medulla. Bend head backward toward the spine, *tensing the 20th part (back of neck)* as far as possible. Relax. *Then quickly drop head toward the chest, still keeping fingers in position.* Exercise three times."*



19. Biceps recharging. With this exercise we return to the graduality mode of tensing and relaxing, which will be used in the following 20-part full-body recharge.

20. Twenty-part full-body prana recharge. This exercise has been fully explained in the previous chapter. At the end of the five phases, remain still for at least ten seconds, with the body completely relaxed and try to feel the effects of the recharge.

21. Weight-lifting to the shoulders. All of the weight-lifting exercises work the arm and shoulder muscles as well as the deltoids and trapezius muscles of the upper back, and the shoulder joints. With all of these exercises make sure that the arms are fully tensed from the beginning and throughout the first phase. Make the movements full range. The relaxation moments are brief but should be respected. The contrary movements then begin with full vibration and are full range.

22. Double breathing with elbows touching. The resistance is provided by imaginary pressure against the upper arms. With the forearms at right angles to the upper arms, the strong contraction includes the entire arms, deltoids and trapezius muscles, and also the pectoral muscles, working the shoulder joints as well. The elbows remain at shoulder level throughout the movements. This exercise, which includes double breathing along with the movements, helps to improve respiration as well as heart muscle function.

23. Weight pulling to the sides. The same muscles and benefits involved in the previous exercise are also involved in this one. Keep the shoulders relaxed slightly downward; do not lift them towards the ears.

24. Arm rotation in small circles. The resistance is provided by imaginary weights held in the hands. The contraction increases as the exercise progresses as the weights begin to feel heavier. Pause and relax before performing the exercise in the opposite direction. Shoulders relaxed as in the previous exercise.

25. Weight pulling to the forehead. The same modality and benefits as those previous. Make sure the movements begin and continue with full contraction and vibration, pausing briefly to relax the contraction before continuing in the opposite direction.

26. Hand and finger recharging. Kriyananda says: "Open and close whole hand with tension; at least six times in each arm position." This exercise irrigates the finger joints and helps in preventing or relieving arthritis.

27. Four-part arm recharging. This is part of the weight-lifting exercises and the resistance causes tension while the arms are in movement. At the end of each of the four movements, before starting the next movement, there is a brief pause and relaxation. Kriyananda says: "Tense the whole body when you double inhale and stretch up onto the toes at the end of the cycle."

28. Overhead weight lifting. Imagine you are pulling the weight from the ground upwards, with high vibration exerted before starting, using the double inhalation to lift and the double exhalation to lower, with relaxation of the arm during the lowering phase.

29. Lateral weight lifting. This is a weight-lifting, not a side stretching exercise. There is high resistance, provided by the tense spine. Kriyananda says: "The feet apart. Lift the weights up alongside the head, until the inside of the arm touches the ear. The fist is pointed away from head."

* Yogananda, Swami, *Yogoda Course*, Lesson 2, Los Angeles, California: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1925.

30-31. Walking/running in place. These are the aerobic exercises (although all of the exercises favor the heart and breathing), and in addition to benefiting the legs, they also and importantly benefit the heart muscle.

Notice also that by bringing the thighs high enough to touch the abdomen, these two exercises also benefit digestion.

If you have a heart condition or high or low blood pressure, do this exercise cautiously, listening to your body and the advice of your physician.

Upon completion of these two exercises, pause to permit the heart rate to return to a more normal rhythm.

Yogananda says:*

- If you do the indoor walking and running exercises twice daily in fresh air, it will do much to keep your body fit.
- When tired, practice the walking and running exercises several times, as well as the tensing and relaxing exercises, until fatigue leaves you. (People who have weak hearts should not practice the running exercise.)
- Walk or run standing on one spot, alternately raising knees upward, thighs touching abdomen...heels touching haunches.

Years ago I prepared for the Himalayan Pilgrimage organized by Ananda with a rather rigorous training program of long walks at altitude for many months. A friend of mine prepared in another way: she included in her Energization practice about 20 minutes of the walking and running exercises, and no other exercises beyond that. Her training turned out to be as good as mine: we walked those steep paths together.

32. Fencing. Kriyananda says: “The fist is on an angle facing slightly inward: the top of fist angled inward. Stretch across the chest, bringing opposite shoulder back to accentuate the stretch in the chest. The main tension is in back leg, the back and front of shoulders, and in the back between shoulders, as well as across chest, and in the forward arm.” With the heels on the floor, the forward movement gives a good stretch to the calf and the Achilles tendon.

33. Large circles with the arms. The resistance here is provided by strongly tensing the arms before lifting them upward, with a double breath. The relaxation phase is when the arms are brought down. The entire upper body and back benefit as well as the shoulder joints.

34. Stomach recharging. Many illnesses are due to troubled digestion and blockages in the intestines. This exercise is especially important, and one that Yogananda comments on at some length. You can practice them within the full series, increasing their number, or practice them independently at other moments, whenever the stomach is completely empty, “to be practiced daily in the morning after leaving bed, either in the early morning or evening.”

“These are special exercises for those who particularly want to improve digestion and eliminate constipation and other abdominal troubles by increasing the peristaltic movements of the intestines and more uniform secretions of the glands – liver, pancreas, etc. – in a proper way... (They) are to be done at least 15 times; 20 or more if needed...up to 40 times, increasing a few each day until you reach the maximum number.

Those without any abdominal troubles may equally well take them without any harm. They are indispensably necessary for all.”†

35-37 are repetitions of earlier exercises 1– 3.

38. Hip recharging. The resistance is supplied by the weight of the leg as it is rotated.

39. Relax and feel! This is a very important exercise and should be done many times. This is the time when the body and mind absorb more deeply the energy which has been activated. It is the “relax and feel” at the end of the complete practice.



Throughout the entire practice, the heart rate will have been accelerated. With this final exercise, letting the breath flow naturally and extending the pauses between inhalation and exhalation, and exhalation and inhalation, the heart slows down. Continue these cycles until the heart rate more or less returns to normal.

Kriyananda says: “Pause when the breath is in (as long as comfortable), then exhale with a double exhalation, extending the arms straight forward, the fingers extended, and the palms facing downward. Pause with breath out (as long as comfortable). If possible, face the wind.”

* Yogananda, Swami, *Yogoda Course*, Lesson 3, Los Angeles, California: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1925.

† Yogananda, Swami, *Yogoda Tissue Will System of Physical Perfection*, Boston, Massachusetts: Sat-Sanga, 1925.