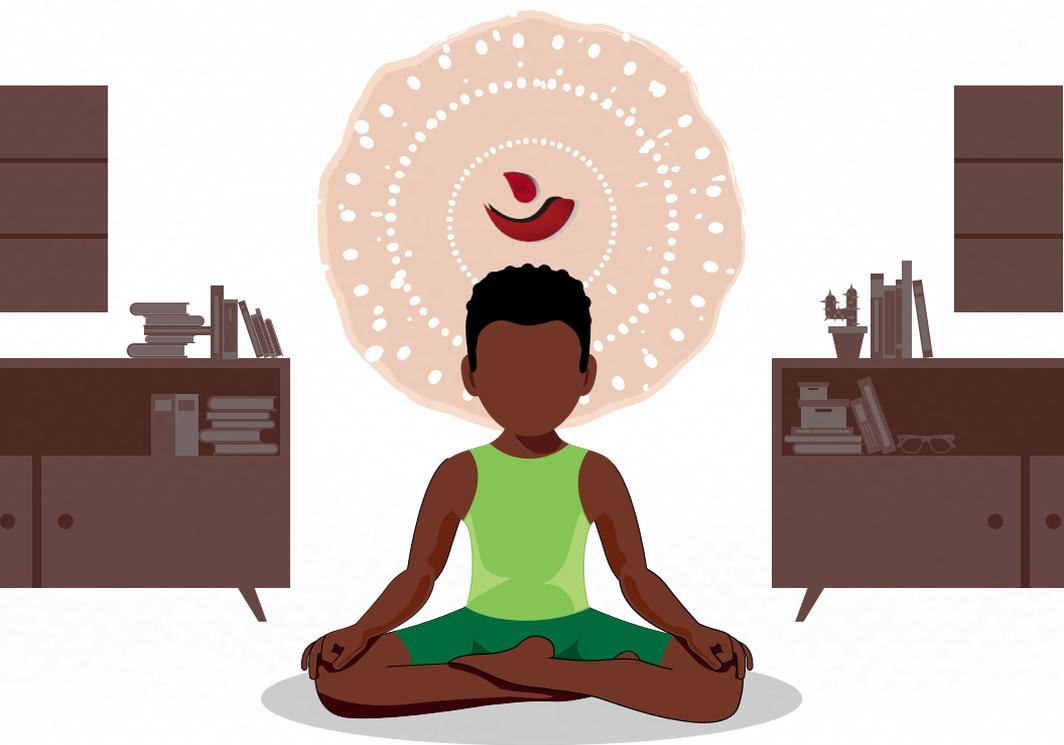


Meditation **G**uide



Black **M**ale
YOGA INITIATIVE

BY CHANGA BELL

About the **A**uthor



Changa Bell is a Georgetown University certified Life, Health & Wellness Coach, Mindfulness Expert, Yoga Studio Owner, and Executive Director of the nationally acclaimed organization, The Black Male Yoga Initiative (BMYI).

BMYI exists to educate, engage and empower individuals to reach their ultimate health and mental wellness. Bell believes that 'Health is Our Heritage' as human beings and his message of "connection" for everyone has led to the creation of the LifeForce™ Development Program. Changa continues to support Empowerment, and Health Equality through Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness and has helped many people worldwide. He was born and raised in Baltimore, MD and has received honors from the local city council, the mayor's office and is a recipient of President Barak Obama's Volunteer Service Award. Changa has a unique ability to connect people with their purpose and presents often at conferences, seminars, fairs, festivals, and workshops. He is a loving husband and a devoted father of 6 who has dedicated his life to helping others.

Healthy In **Body**
Healthy In **Spirit**



“Health” in the body doesn’t mean the absence of disease or being pain free. Health is a presence of joy and acceptance. Health emanates from the Astral Body and it requires an acute understanding of where your body is relative to what you have always known your body to “feel” in the past.

How your body feels “now” in movement, and with mobility as opposed to what you think it “should” be. Being healthy of body is developing a healthy indifference to certain new feelings, and always moving toward increased mobility, stability, and freedom and away from disease and degeneration. Ultimately, a healthy body means having a healthy and positive relationship with your body.

Healthy In **B**ody
Healthy In **S**pirit



Provide time to empty the mind from extra thoughts so that it is free to discern choices both imminent and of your own will. Thoughts may be both rational, and irrational. However, the thoughts that are in line with your values and sentiments about what it means to be human are the thoughts you can actively “choose”.

In choosing healthy thoughts to act on, and integrate into your being, life can take on transformational change. A healthy mind understands that we are all one mind, but in various expressions. Mental fortitude and emotional dissipation against the rigors of life produce resiliency. A health mind is resilient and adaptable to stress, thus reducing stress reactions in the body by neutralizing the brain. A neutral brain does not produce stress hormones into the blood, rather in remaining neutral the central nervous system reduces cortisol levels and induces dopamine to support the creation of peace of mind, focus, and equanimity in the body.

Yoga, Meditation and Mudras

Meditation is an aspect of yoga. Specifically, when speaking of Raja Yoga, also known as Ashtanga Yoga. Ashtanga means “8” in Sanskrit, and meditation is the 7th Stage of the “8” Ashtanga stages. Meditation is preceded by Concentration (single pointed focus,) and followed by Samadhi, otherwise known as Self-Realization. Typically in the Western world, we practice a form of Ashtanga yoga. All yoga is “Hatha” yoga, but that is a more lengthy discussion for another time. For right now our focus is meditation.

It is critical that we understand meditation as an important element of our yoga practice. Yoga may be practiced completely, doing all stages simultaneously, or by focusing on specific stages at different times. Nevertheless, it is definitely critical to develop the body in stage three — asanas/postures, before trying to sit and meditate for long periods of time. The body will be weak and never cease complaining, which will subsequently cause major mental distractions, and meditation will be hard — if not impossible.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras 1.2 states, “yogah citta vritti nirodhah,” translated as — Yoga is the cessation of “movement” in consciousness, or said differently — Yoga quiets the modulations of the mind. Thus, yoga is a restraint on fluctuations of the in-coming and out-going thought process. Yoga as a science trains the mind and matures our spirituality and being. Finally, use a mudra to help channel energy and activate particular parts of the brain during meditation, thus, “lighting up” or sparking neurons in a manner that is not typical of day-to-day activity. The following mudras are common gestures to use during meditation practice. Remember, yoga is a journey, not a light-hearted, quick trip! What at first seems challenging, or even silly, gets easier over time, and actions become clear with the light of wisdom to lead the way!

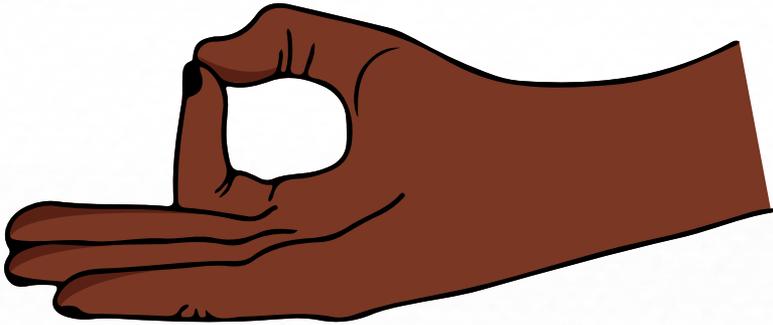
Kubera Mudra

Kubera mudra is known for increasing wealth, or for abundance. However, a word of caution, Kubera mudra increases the “well of your desires.” This is why we must “cleanse” and purify our thoughts first with Yamas and Niyamas. A clear heart, produces pure desires. If negative thoughts produce adverse desires, we may increase challenges in our path through this mudra.



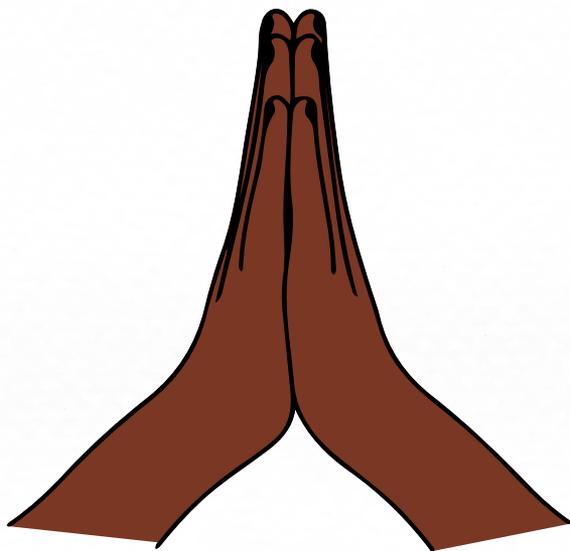
Chin Mudra

Chin means consciousness in Sanskrit. Chin mudra reminds us of a key goal of yoga, to unify and recognize that all consciousness is Supreme consciousness. Bring the thumb and index finger together, rest the hands on the knees. Hold the mudra for a few minutes or however long your meditation is. The longer you hold a mudra, the more energy both flows through, and remains in your body.



Anjali Mudra

Anjali mudra is known as the “prayer mudra.” The tips of the thumbs rest gently at the heart. The energy of the palms unify and intention is made clear. Anjali symbolizes honor and respect toward self and the universe. Keep a high awareness on deepening your breath with this mudra. Anjali is a great way to both start, and “seal”, meaning to end, a practice of yoga and/or meditation.





Meditation Checklist

Room — Clear, clean, not-too-hot, not-too-cold, quiet and dry space with good air circulation (as best as you can do.) The space should be free from pests, pets, or children. If you do not have a dedicated room in your house or apartment, try to make an area in a room which you dedicate only for spiritual or meditative practice.

Sound — In the beginning you may want to have ambient sounds to assist your session. There are plenty of Apps that help by providing both a timer and sounds/music. However, it is best to practice in the peace provided by your space. Utilize the low groan of a bus passing by, the birds chirping or the neighbors muffled music that spills quietly into your hearing sphere. As long as the noises are not too distinct, they will meld into the muddle of life and will not disturb your meditation practice. Soft foam earplugs are also a welcomed tool.



Meditation Checklist

Pillow — Meditation pillow and blankets. Blankets may be used to cover the body for warmth, or to be folded to rest the knees upon if sitting in Virasana (knees folded beneath the body.) Blankets may also serve as a cushion for the buttocks. Furthermore, a meditation pillow often provides a decent amount of height off the floor to alleviate discomfort in the hips. Tight hips may cause a persistent and distracting pain. To make the pain go away or to at best be tolerable for the moments of meditation, sit on a cushion 8" to 10 inches thick to allow the tight hip flexors a gentle way to open, if the hips are too tight to withstand a crosslegged position for a long duration, you may lay on your back on the floor. Stay awake, snoring and sleeping may disrupt your meditation practice!





Meditation Checklist

Wall — It is not uncommon to be very sleepy or to have weak back muscles when you first start a meditation practice. It could be weeks, months or years before you are able to sit up straight and meditate without falling to sleep. Remember to cultivate the skill to concentrate first. Don't be too hard on yourself if you are unable to focus. Instead, celebrate the fact that your body is getting a long deserved rest that it needs. If you are consistently slouching and sleepy, use a wall to support your back so that you are able to sit up straight. You may also use a chair to sit up straight in and place the hands face up, or face down on folded.





Meditation Checklist

Timer — If you are using a mobile device, turn the phone on to Airplane Mode so that no calls or notifications interrupt your meditation session. Set the device timer to 5, 10, 15, 30 minutes or more. It is important when you first start out to time your sessions so that you can see your growth. However, do not strive by setting a competitive goal. For example, to set a goal to go from 5 minutes daily to 30 minutes daily in two weeks. Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness are lifestyle changes. It is of no use to hurry, the process is the reward.

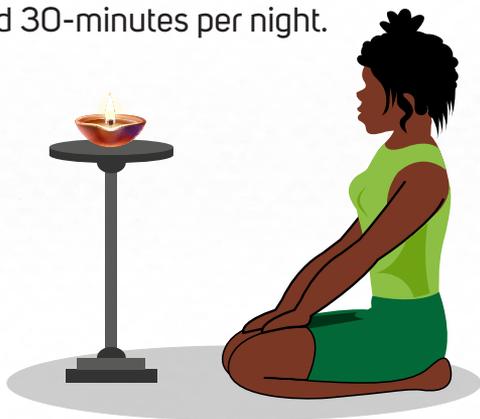


Strategies for **Meditation**

1st Strategy

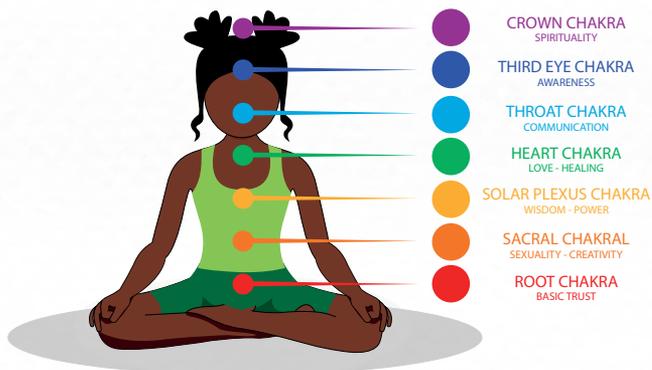
Meditation requires focus. Learn first to develop your concentration skills. You can do a simple candle gazing exercise, where you stare at a candle approximately 2 feet in front of you.

The candle should be eye level. At first your eyes will water and you will blink a great deal. As you get more proficient you will be able to withstand the gaze for great lengths. Candle gazing also cure impurities from the eyes. Do not use faux lights, electronic lights, or devices. The natural light of a candle is all that is needed. Clear away from window curtains and other highly flammable items. Practice for 15-minutes per night and increase time as desired — do not exceed 30-minutes per night.



2nd Strategy

Focus your energy on a single energy center (chakra.) It is advised then when you select an energy center that you always use that center. So if you begin with the "Third Eye", the pineal gland located between the eyebrows, you will grow and learn to reveal the mysteries associated with that region over the course of a lifetime. Wherever your attention goes, your energy grows. Energy will build in the region of your choice, spreading the energy out to a little in each area may lessen the impact and power of your meditation. Once an area is mastered, then move on to the next. Energy, however, will compound in a single area over time, thus increasing mastery and its rewards.



3rd Strategy

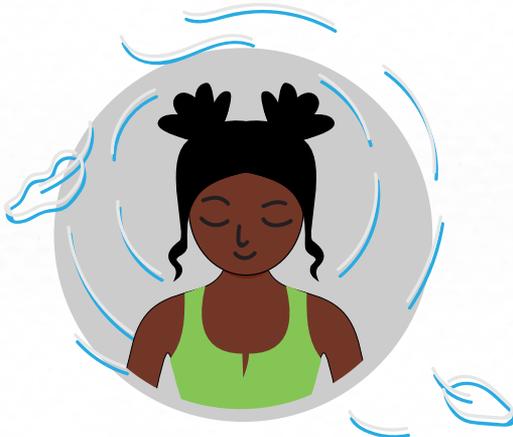
Pay close attention to your breath. Do not attempt to control or change the breath, simply observe, the gentle rise and fall of the breath in the body. Notice after a while that you are not breathing at all, rather, something is breathing you! When the mind starts to wander simply return your attention back to your breathing.

Eventually the awareness of breathing will turn into an ephemeral experience in which you will find yourself in a "space" outside of time and space. This space of pure "being," is an outcome of meditation.



4th Strategy

It is best to keep the eyes closed when meditating. The brain is stimulated by the senses. The mind is all there is. Yogis refer to our physical world as “maya” or illusion, in that all we witness is a product of mind. When we see, hear, smell, and touch the world, we are participating in the effects of the mind. To help us focus on source, we “turn off” false awareness and rest for pure being. By closing the eyes and gazing “inward” into the reflection of our soul we rest in the source of all things. This sounds poetic and philosophical, but at the simplest level, shutting the eyes promotes focus.



5th Strategy

Breathing is ALWAYS extremely important. Develop your Dirga, (Dirgha) and sometimes Durga breath, aka 3-Part breathing technique so that your body is able to maintain a presence of peace via the parasympathetic nervous system. Dirga breathing is highly effective and increases your body's ability to take in more life sustaining oxygen, and allows you to destress and calm the body almost instantly. Cultivate a greater capacity for meditation practice by practicing various forms of Pranayama (breathing techniques.)

*Resume back to your natural breathing during meditation.



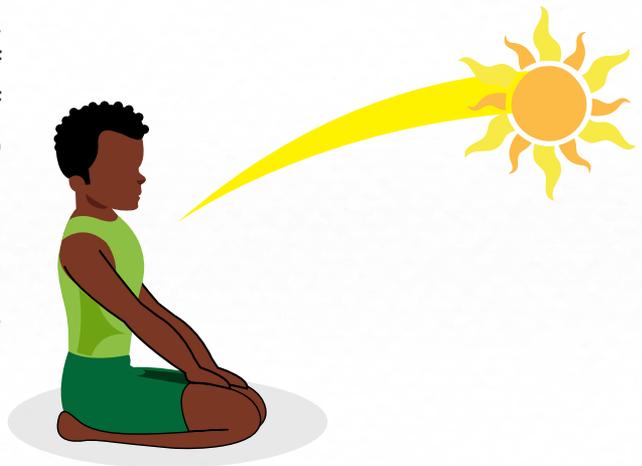
6th Strategy

Clothing is critical. The skin breaths too as it is porous. Having on light or as little clothing as possible is best. Clothing should be comfortable so that it does not constrict or wedge in unseen areas, that may subsequently distract your intentions. Invest in light, breathable, comfortable clothing for your meditation practice, not slick, synthetic, man made material such as form-fitting yoga clothes which often restrict circulation or artificially increase circulation via compression. Be at peace in every aspect of your being, including your outerwear.



7th Strategy

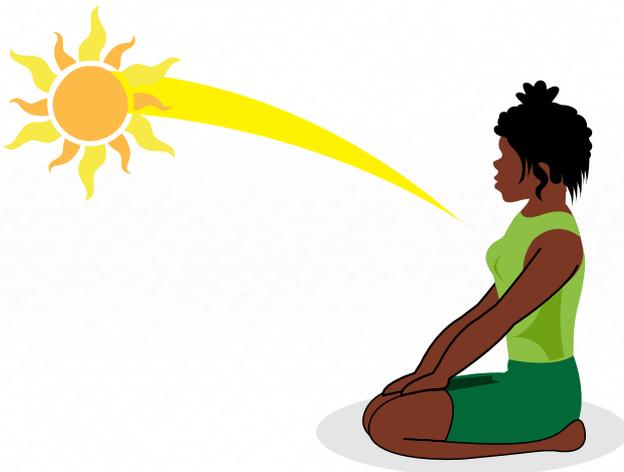
Direction is also important. You will naturally develop an awareness of which direction to face. You will even begin to “feel” objects in the room, a chair, a large couch either giving off its own distracting energy or absorbing/blocking your own. Be isolated from “annoyances” and allow for as much space possible as required by your subtle body. In the morning you want to face East. In the Evening face West. However, if North is really calling you, face North! More in depth study will be required to learn the resulting effects of facing North vs. East, or South vs. West in terms of energy. As a rule of thumb, allow your face to follow the direction of the sun. Not that you want to stare into the sun or that you must be in the sunlight at all times.



7th Strategy

Rather, that even when you are indoors in a room with no windows, if you are aware of the time of day you are also aware of where the sun would be during that time. Face that direction when able. This suggestion is for our private practice only. If you are in a class lead by an instructor, maintain respect and symmetry that is required by the teacher.

Some may have all sit against the wall and face the center, other teachers may have you lay on the ground, still others may have you face them at the front of the room. All is fine. For your private practice, face the direction of the light.



Healthy In **B**ody

Sit in Lotus or Sukhasana

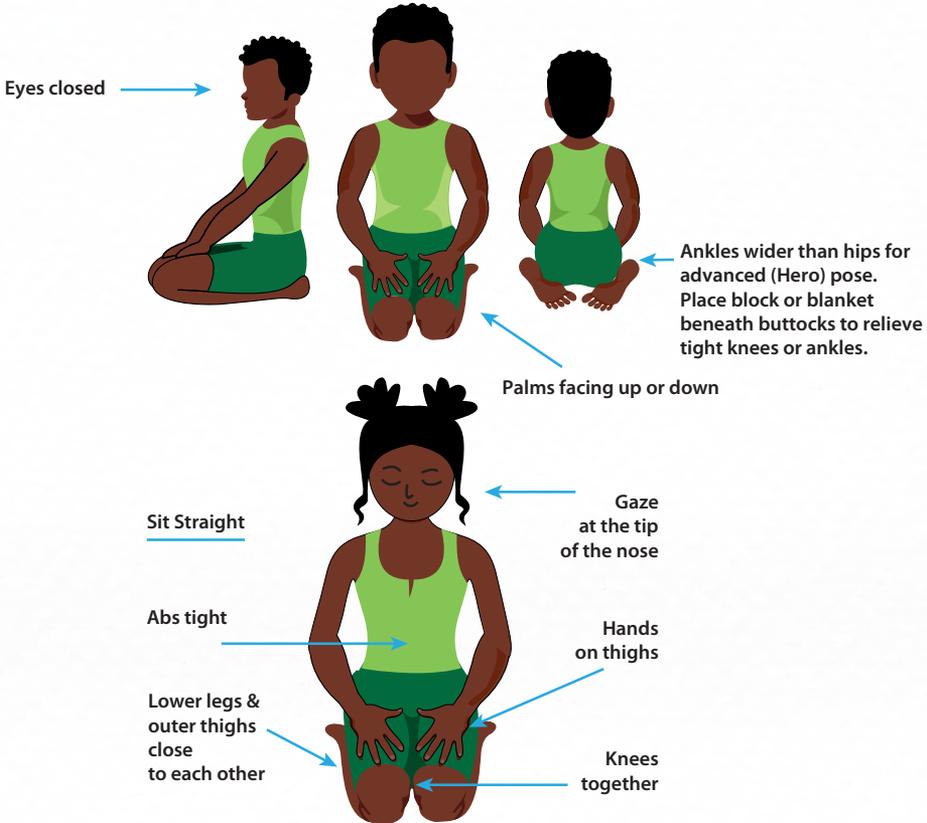
This is the simplest posture for meditation. If you are tired or experiencing back pain. Lay down.



Use wall for back support, until back is strong enough through asana practice to stay upright. Try your best not to slouch.

Hands in Chin Mudra or open palms up or palms down.

Virasana



Things to remember...

- ☺ Practice daily to build skill slowly over time. Your time duration will naturally increase.
- ☺ Write in a spiritual journal, writing helps clear the mind.
- ☺ Review your spiritual journey at night before bed. This may mean reading a spiritual passage, or doing a brief breathing exercise or meditation.
- ☺ Intentions matter. Literally! Your intentions will manifest so be sincere and heartfelt in your practice.
- ☺ Check-in every few weeks or so. Are you feeling better? More aware? Less lethargic? More energy and/or clarity? If not, reevaluate and make changes. If yes, write about the changes in your journal.
- ☺ Are you more peaceful, less angry? Has peace started to manifest in your manner of being?

#healthisourheritage

#bmyination

#bmyistrong



Black Male

YOGA  INITIATIVE

www.changabell.com
www.bmyi.org



Changa Bell Publishing ©2019