

# THE POWER OF INVERSIONS



Bindie Edwards July 2021

# BENEFITS



Inversions can:-

- Strengthen back, abdominal and core musculature
- Strengthen arms and shoulders
- Decompress the lumbar spine
- Decompress the organs
- Often refresh us
- Challenges the nervous system – different orientation

# MYTH AND MYSTERY



Said to:

- Be the path to eternal youth and immortality (HYP)
- Benefit heart, lungs and brain
- Reduce blood pressure
- Balance hormones and metabolism
- Decompress the spine and tone the organs
- Improve circulation and lymphatic systems
- .....what's the truth.....?



- Energetically, inversions can be either Yang or Yin (ie. stimulate the SNS or the PSNS)
- Physically we have to consider the effects of gravity
- And also strength, or otherwise, of relevant areas of our body
- Psychologically, turning ourselves upside down gives us a different perspective



# PHYSIOLOGY and GRAVITY

NASA found that when astronauts were in zero gravity conditions changed the body, including:

Sense of balance was destroyed

Muscles atrophied

Bone density plummeted

Various other serious physiological effects.

**BUT INVERSIONS ARE STILL SUBJECT TO GRAVITY SO.....**

Gravity has profound effect on human body –

Weighs us down so we build strength.

Increases our bone density

Over time it causes tissues to 'move south' resulting in prolapse, hemorrhoids and varicose veins

Lower parts of the spine suffer from compression

The heart tires and falters

# In Theory What happens if we reverse gravity?

- Blood floods towards the heart, giving the heart a rest and allowing blood to circulate better
- Venous blood can use gravity to return to the heart, allowing the valves to open and release
- Lymph can also return to the heart using the force of gravity instead of needing movement to pump it back up, making the system more efficient
- The organs rest on the diaphragm so that they press against each other differently, perhaps being massaged in the process
- The diaphragm has to work a bit harder and becomes stronger
- Blood is flooded into the upper chambers of the lungs decompressing the lower lung
- The lumbar spine is decompressed allowing the discs to draw in more fluid
- Cerebrospinal fluid is encouraged to flow back to the brain, nourishing and cleansing it

# MYTH OR MAGIC?

- Does that mean that inversions DO help the hormonal system function better?
- Jury's out. Very few clinical studies and those that exist are on small numbers of people
- Does compressing the Thyroid stimulate it to work better?
- Unproven.
- Can inversions reduce blood pressure?
- Probably, as initial blood flow to the chest and head stimulate the baroreceptors in chest and neck to instruct the brain to reduce blood pressure
- Does it create increased pressure in the head?
- Tests suggest that pressure in the head is managed.  
However, it is best not to take chances if pressure becomes uncomfortable or you have pressure related eye conditions.



# MENSTRUATION



It is commonly taught that women should not do inversions when menstruating. Is this fact or fiction?

- Medically there is no reason why women should not do inversions when they have their period. HOWEVER.....
- Strong engagement of abdomen may be uncomfortable
- May temporarily block delicate blood vessels in uterus
- Women often feel below par at this time
- Yogic perspective: time of APANA. By reversing gravity, going against the body and nature, disturbing balance of the Vayu



# POSTURAL HABITS



Lordosis

- Our postural habits resurface when we invert .....
- Even when we think we have resolved them!



# CONSIDERATIONS

- NEVER try to do an inversion that is beyond your strength to do safely.
- Consider the position and check that parts of your body taking pressure are healthy enough to do so (eg Neck conditions and injury when in shoulder stand)
- There are many passive or easier versions of inversions that are safe to do even if you have mild hypertension or heart conditions
- Think of suitable alternatives....



# CONTRA- INDICATION S

- Uncontrolled hypertension
- Glaucoma or detached retina
- Neck or shoulder injuries (dependent on inversion)
- Carpal tunnel injury (dependent on inversion)
- Hiatus Hernia
- Headaches and migraine
- Menstruation (personal option)
- Sometimes pregnancy



# SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES OF INVERSIONS

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- Maintain the integrity of the spine
- Establish stable base
- Consider alignment and lines of force
- When done in a yang way requires whole body engagement
- Can change our perspective
- Fear is a limiting factor