



Twists

**PRINCIPLES OF
PRACTICE**



Twisting Asana of the Syllabus



- Parivrtti Trikonasana
(Revolved Triangle Pose)
- Jathara Parivrtti
(Revolved Abdomen
Pose/Supine Twist)
- Ardha Matsyendrasana
(Half Lord of the Fishes
Pose)

Effects & Benefits

Functional:

- Functional - maintains mobility and enables everyday activities

Physical:

- Maintains / improves range of movement of the spine
- Encourages realignment from repetitive everyday activities
- Stimulates & tones abdominal organs
- Cleansing / refreshing (“squeeze & soak effect” Iyengar)
- Supports peristalsis / digestion
- Releases tension from chest, shoulders, neck, back, hips
- Strengthens abdominal muscles (obliques)
- Maintains resilience of soft tissues and intervertebral discs

Effects & Benefits

Emotional & mental:

- Calming / energising
- Freedom from being caught up 'in knots'
- Ability to handle the twists & turns of life
- Seeing things from another perspective

Energy body:

- Awakens the body's core – connection to the manipura chakra
- Movement of prana (samana vayu)



*“If the body is [twisted into] knots,
so are the mind and emotions....
What has been twisted can be untwisted”*
Swami Sivananda Radha

Anatomy of twists

- Axial rotation.
 - Asymmetrical movement
 - 24 rotations from neck (C1) - sacrum
 - Cervical: up to 90 degrees
 - Thoracic: 30 - 40 degrees
 - Lumbar: 10 - 13 degrees
- Which area has the greatest vulnerability?
- Rotation can occur without altering the body's relationship to gravity



What might impact our range of movement?

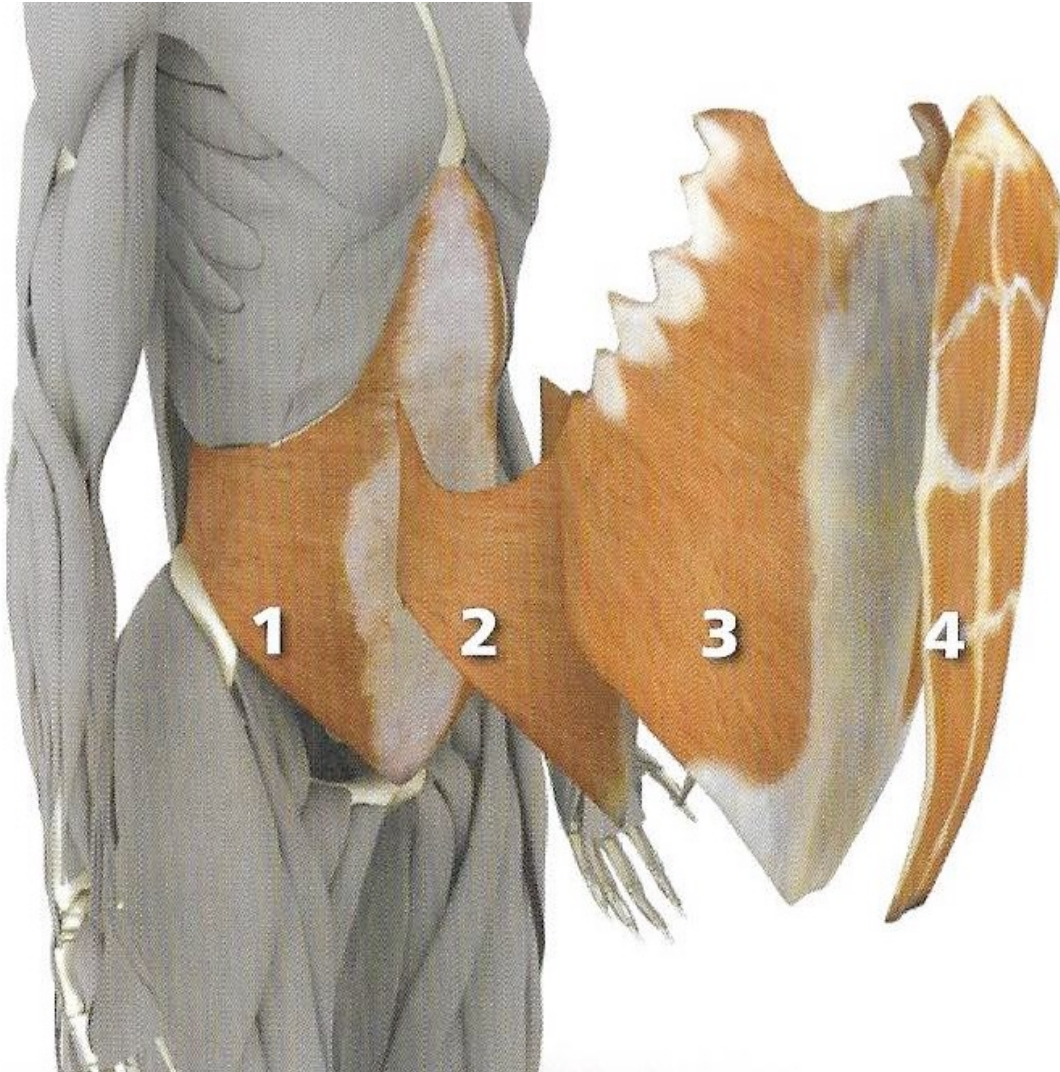
- Rib cage & sternum
- Muscles & ligaments from head to pelvis
- Intervertebral discs
- Facet joints

Other limiting factors:

- Spinal curvature (scoliosis)
- Muscular imbalance / habitual tendencies
- Spinal health (e.g. osteoporosis, spinal rods)
- General health / fitness
- Fascial tightness



The main muscles...



Abdominal Obliques “big pants” muscles

Supportive ‘girdle’ for lower back, pelvis, internal organs

- **2 x external obliques (3)**

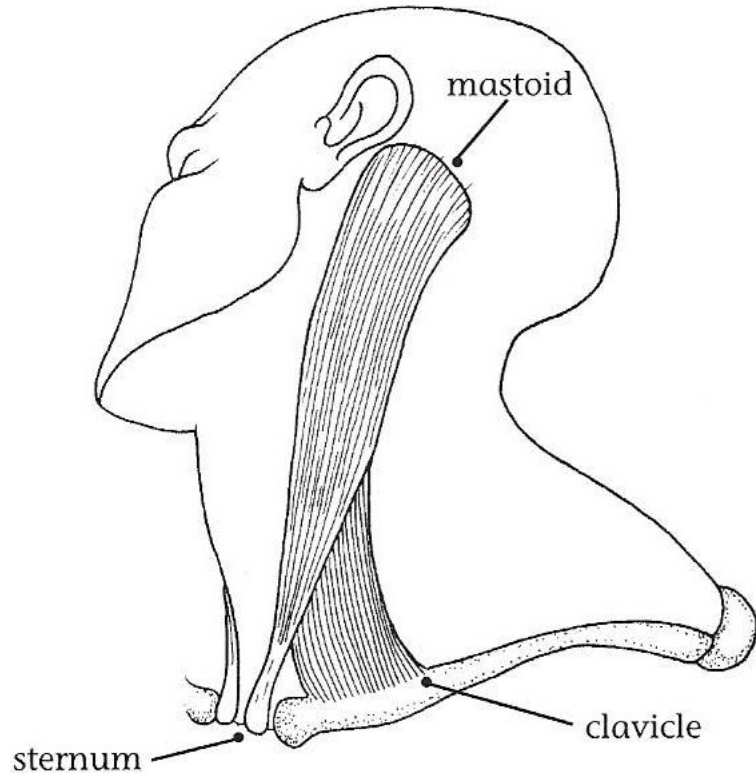
Originate from the lower rib cage & travel down across the abdomen

- **2 x internal obliques (2)**

Originate from pelvis & travel diagonally up the abdomen

- One side contracts while the other lengthens and resists the twist

The 'helper' muscles...



The SCM (sternocleidomastoid)
Image ref 2

Spinal muscles: Semi-spinalis, multifidus, rotators, erector spinae

Ribs: intercostals

Head: SCM (sternocleidomastoid)

Ahimsa: applying non-harm in asana

The Sacroiliac joints...

- SI joints are a joint of stability, not mobility.
- Small amount of movement (2mm) is required to enable walking, standing, sitting.
- Many broad, strong ligaments
- Fixing or squaring the pelvis: risk of 'separating' the ileum and sacrum to excess, overstretching the ligaments causing injury / instability

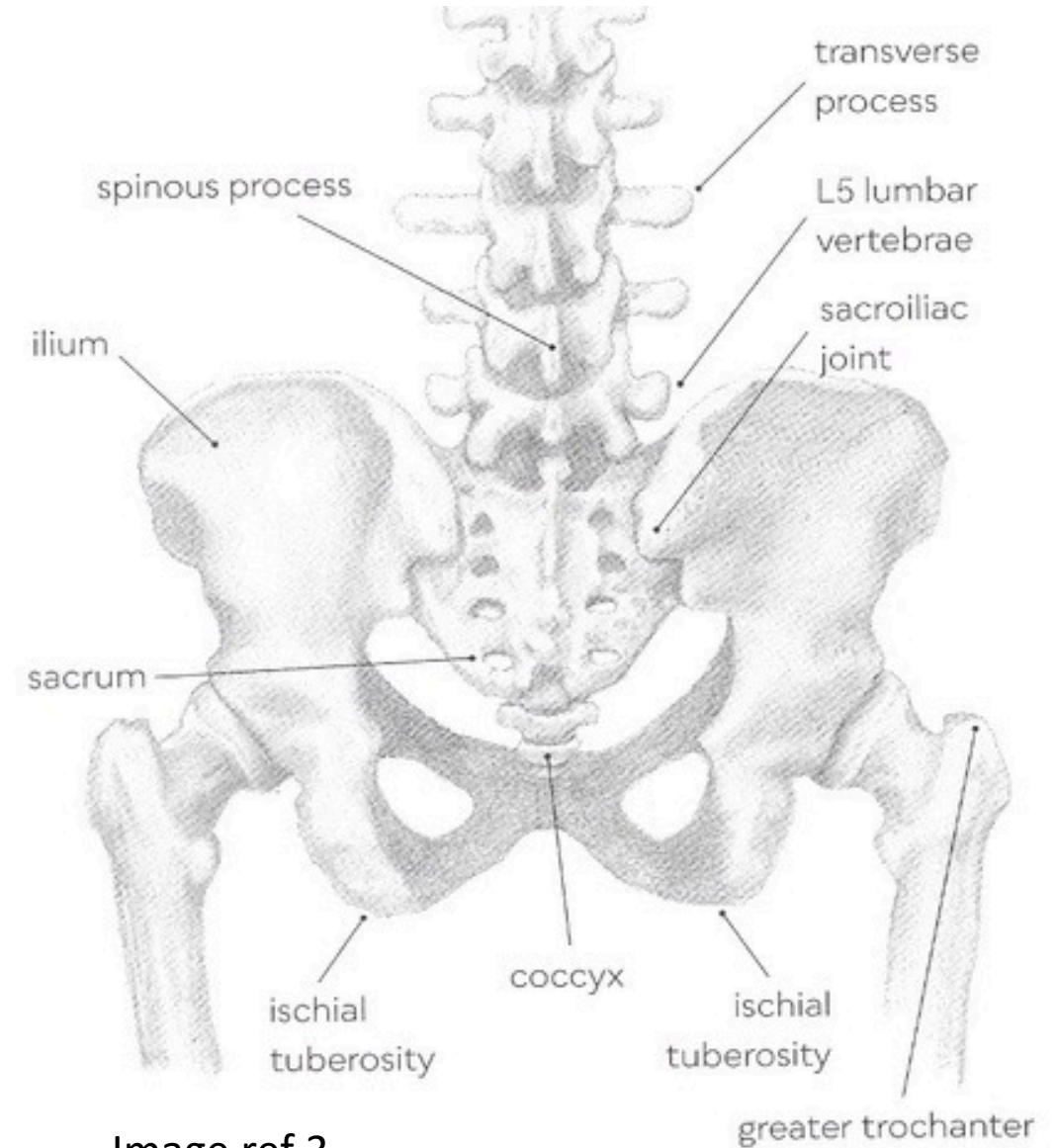


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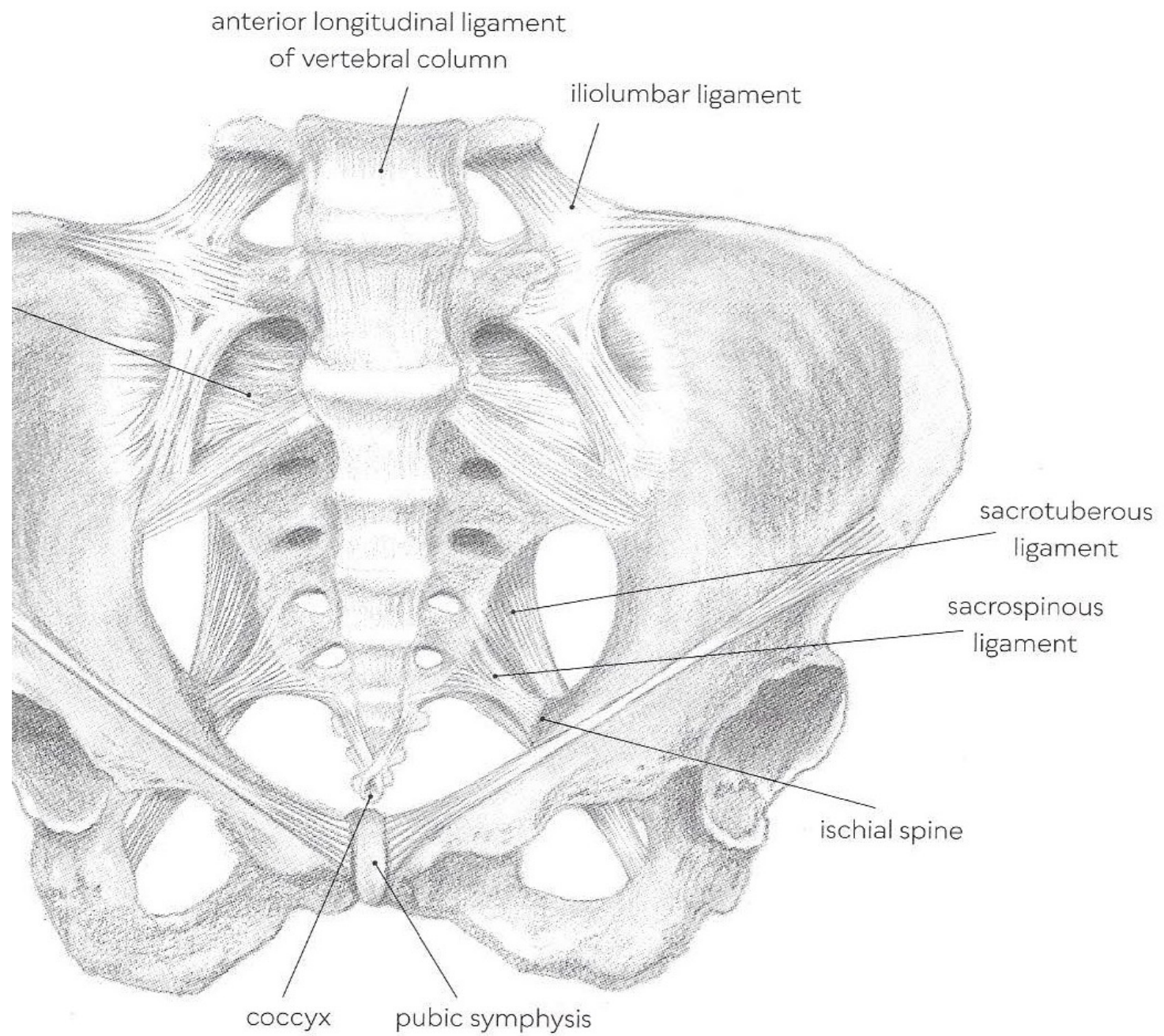




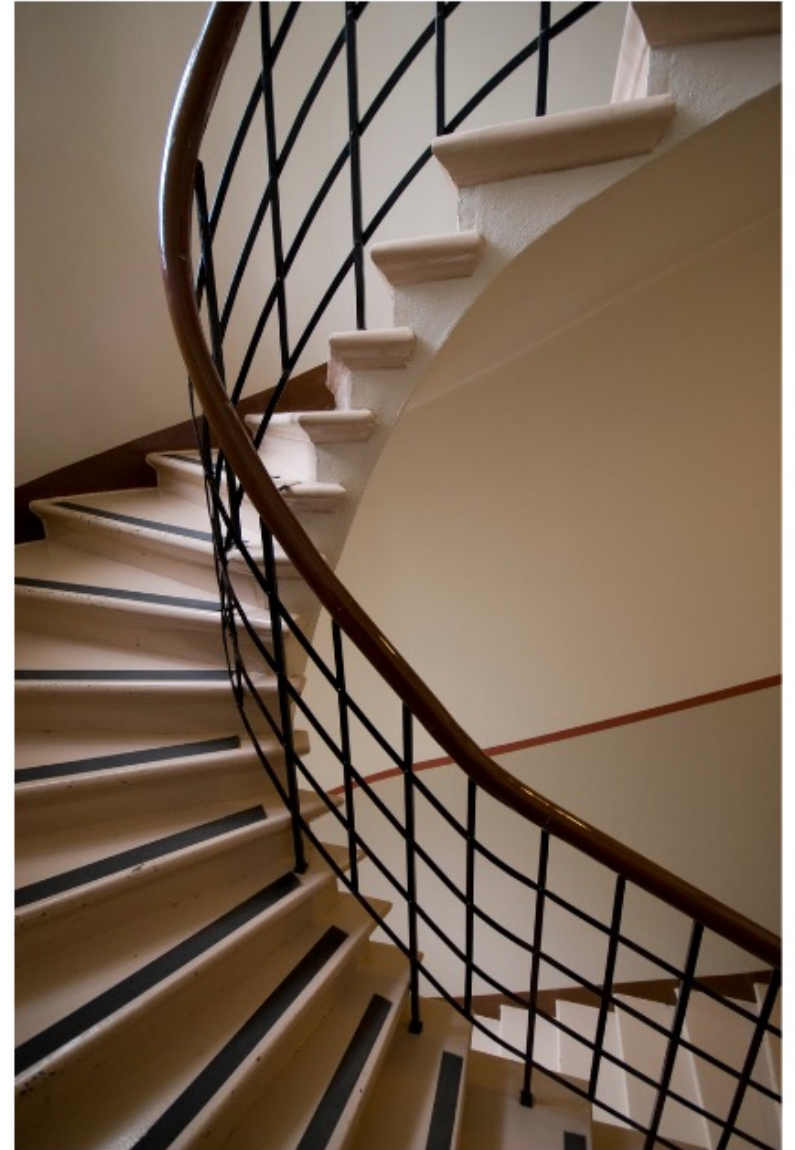
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Allow the pelvis and spine
to move in unity

Yoga : Union

Other practice points...

- Intelligent use of the breath. Let the breath lead you. Inhale take a step up the staircase, exhale begin to spiral (Donna Farhi)
- Allow the spine and pelvis to move in unity
- Establish steady foundations
- Create length in the spinal column
- Initiate movement from the inside outwards – are the inner and outer body in agreement?
- Practice ‘evenly’ both sides (what is ‘even’ – number of breaths or a felt-sense?)
- Can I exit the pose safely? Sthira sukha
- Avoid force e.g. excessive levering the body through the use of arms
- Avoid leading from the head



Ahimsa: applying non-harm in asana

The following may require twists to be practiced with caution, modification or omission...

- Sacro-iliac joint conditions
- Disc herniation
- Peptic ulcer
- Hernia
- Some digestive /abdominal conditions
- Pregnancy ('closed' twists – open twists instead)
- Untreated high blood pressure
- Conditions affecting the neck / cervical spine

Preparing & Counterpose

Preparing the body:

- Warm & release muscles of the torso first
- Dynamic to static
- Simple to complex
- Some twists also require release & warming of the hips, shoulders
- Awaken and strengthen the muscles of the core and back

Counterposes

- Return the body to symmetry
- E.g. Dandasana / Tadasana / Adho Mukha Svanasana
- Avoid ending with a twist as your final asana - bring back symmetry

Bringing twists into your home practice:

- Both prep and neutralising for forward bends & backbends
- Can be supine, seated, standing
- Can be incorporated into non-twisting asana. Can you think of any?
- Subtle supine twists can be used to warm (beginning) and re-align (end)

*“Let your pose be a soft intention –
an open question rather than a definite answer”*

Donna Farhi

Sources of inspiration:

- Kari Knight, BWY Foundation Course & Diploma Course Tutor
- David Coulter
- Judith Hanson Lasater
- Donna Farhi
- Mark Stephens
- Bernie Clark
- Jason Crandell

Images:

1: The Key Muscles of Yoga, Ray Long

2: The Muscle Book, Paul Blakey

3-5: Yoga Myths, Judith Hanson Lasater

Other: Canva