

Week 5. Walk the Earth

YOGA OFF THE MAT

1. As Katy Bowman points out in 'Move your DNA – Restore your Health through natural movement, walking is not optional. Walking defines us as a species and is a biological imperative, like eating.

My encouragement to you is to make walking part of your daily life. Walk to work and to the shops. If it's too far, try walking to the train instead of driving there, and then get off the bus a few stops before your destination. Instead of competing for the closest parking space or paying extra for a nearby lot, park farther away and walk to your destination. Go for a walk at lunchtime instead of spending all your time in the cafeteria.

2. When you are out on your daily walk it's easy to become distracted by listening to a podcast, a phone call or to your friend who you might be walking with. Could you take even just two minutes at the beginning to make it a mindful walk noticing:

- The feeling of your feet imprinting on the ground
- Where you are being breathed
- From where you initiate your walk

Can you stay connected to your solar plexus, at T12, knowing that it is the origin for both your psoas and your diaphragm?

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YOGA ON THE MAT

Can you take the Yielding principle into movement and feel your breath arriving at your diaphragm? Some words from Donna Farhi to inspire your practice of this.

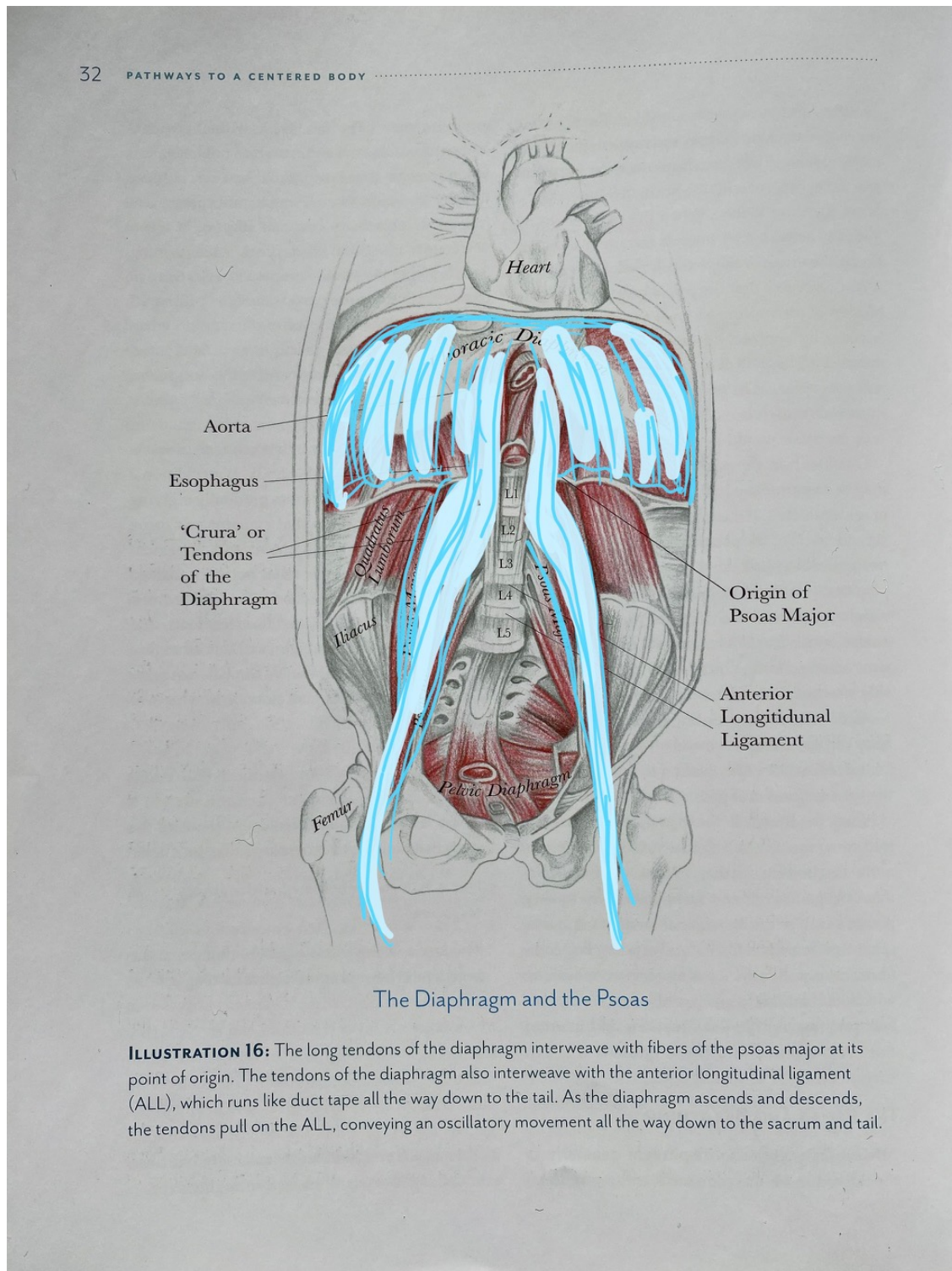
The diaphragm and the iliopsoas muscle share a point of origin in front of your T12 vertebrae which is also the energetic area known as the solar plexus. Mapping and tracking this area down to your feet will remind you that your legs start from this rather central place rather than at your hips. Freeing up the pathway from T12 down through the inner legs and to the soles of the feet throughout practice and postures can be a useful way to free up any tightness in the psoas, balance out asymmetries and find a mobile breathing core from which to move into the world.

Liz Koch, the Psoas Expert, uses the image of a ball bouncing against the floor to describe how weight moves down through the bones and as it makes contact with the earth's surface and then reflecting back up through the bones. When the bones are supporting weight then the psoas can be free of tension and able to serve the spine not as a ligament but as a guy wire.

When considering and moving with awareness of both the Diaphragm and the Iliopsoas I like to visualise the form of a Jellyfish – I connect with the ideokinetic form of an ancient jellyfish that got stuck in my rib cage! It allows me to connect with the three dimensionality of concentric pulsing and free fall through the umbrella shape of the jellyfish body but then also to feel the fluidity and freedom of its floaty legs streaming down inside my own boney limbs!

How can you connect with this area that initiates both your walking and breathing during your own practice?

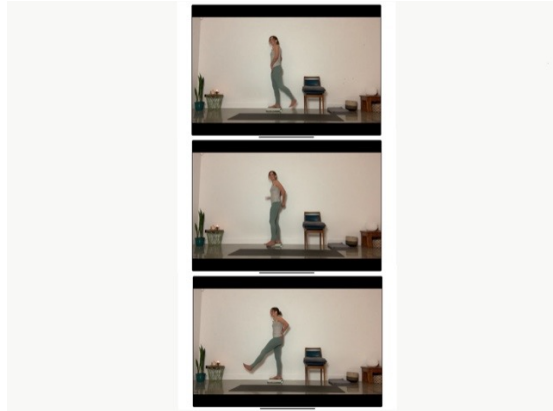
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Original anatomical image from Donna Farhi's book 'Pathways to a Centred Body' – Highly recommended reading for understanding more about the Psoas.

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The Psoas Swing



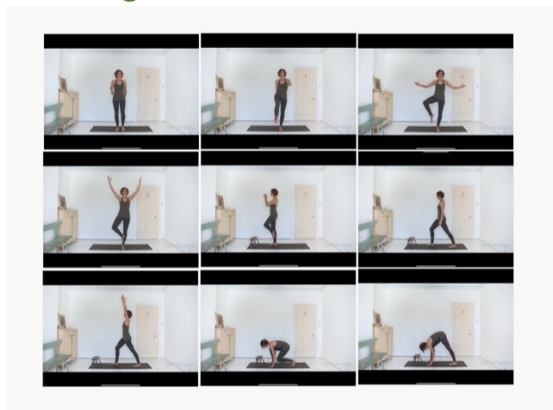
Stand with one foot on a block (hard foam or wood) or thick book (at least 3 inches thick and as wide and long as your foot). Place the opposite hand on a support (a wall or chair). Be sure your supporting shoulder and arm are level and comfortable. Check for skeletal support. Is your torso balanced? Keeping your head up and your eyes forwards, let the free leg swing. When the leg is under the pelvis, the psoas is released.

- As the leg swings forwards the psoas engages by falling back along the spine.
- As the leg moves behind the torso the psoas lengthens.
- As the leg swings, notice if your pelvic girdle is moving with the leg.

This is from the work of Liz Koch.

<http://www.positivehealth.com/article/bodywork/walking-with-your-iliopsoas-muscle>

Walking Tree

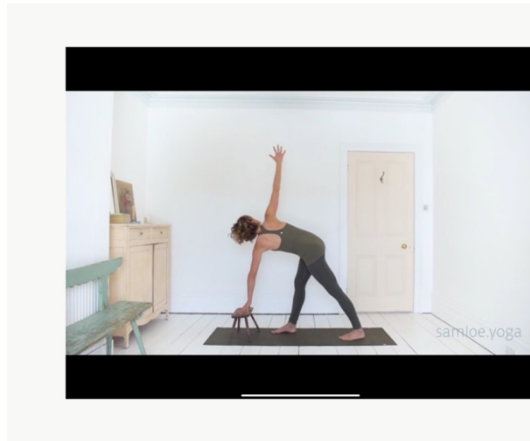


Initiating your movements from the origin of the psoas as you go through a series of positions in this Walking Tree Vinyasa:

- Walking on the spot, heels lifting and dropping
- Psoas Swing with opposite arm movements
- Lifting leg under it's own steam to find Tree
- Curl in to step back into Warrior 1
- Dynamic forward bends in Warrior x 3
- Sprinter x 3
- Warrior 1 static
- Tadasana

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Reverse Triangle



Although Yoga is usually seen as a static practice this week's exploration is how to best move into space through locomotion. It is an invitation to begin interacting with our environment. Reverse Trikonasana is a posture that inhabits the Contralateral movement pattern which is necessary for walking. The posture allows for a sequential rotation through the spine and is a wonderful way to explore the upper body responding to the walking stance in the legs.

Do use a chair to place down your lower hand, this will allow you to yield through that hand and find the support needed for elongating through your spine. Maybe lifting the opposite arm if comfortable?

Legs up on a Chair



A wonderful way to rest tired legs! Place your legs up on a chair and use a cross belt around the thighs to keep the legs contained so that there is no effort required to keep your legs in place. Let the belly be soft and the 'rest and digest' part of your nervous system kick in. Read more here:

<https://samloe.yoga/rest-digest/>