Foundations of Power Workshop:

We had a full house for **Foundations of Power**, our workshop on 18 September. Thank you everyone who attended and everyone who expressed an interest but who we were not able to accommodate.

Here is some feedback from the workshop:

“What I particularly enjoyed was the use of the piece from Journey to the Heart which you used to guide the class. This brought a sense of speciality along with clear intention. I appreciated the opportunities to explore the alignment and structure of the poses further and I found the use of volunteers worked well for this purpose.”

“It reminded me that sometimes it’s good to ‘figure out’ poses at home...to work out my angles, what needs to be engaged, what can be relaxed. This workshop inspired me to do more of that work.”

“I liked that the poses and also the common mistakes were illustrated by your demonstrations in front and that we then had enough time to work on our own as well as with a partner to put the theory into practice and deepen the understanding.”

“My headstand is a step closer to full realisation by myself. With assistance I had a great experience in headstand...”

In Foundations of Power we worked the elements of earth, water, fire and air – and added space in the sense of space to create something new in our asana.

We run workshops regularly and they are a great way to boost your practice and also to meet people and become engaged in this yoga community. Watch for notices for the next workshop we will be running.

New Teaching Personnel:

You will have noticed that we have brought on board as teachers four new powerful yogis. James and Rachel began teaching for us in May. Seanna started teaching in August and
Alice taught her first classes for us in September.

Thank you for the kind comments you have passed back to us about your experiences in our new teachers’ classes. We are pleased with the way our teachers have stepped up to the mark and have maintained the very high standards that we set at Apollo Power Yoga with respect to sequencing, alignment, energy and spiritual focus.

All our new teachers have their particular strengths that distinguish them. However, they all have one thing in common: they were trained by Hamish and Margo in our Step into your Power yoga intensive and teacher training programme!

*Step into your Power* prepares you to show up big as a teacher in the yoga room. But it is not just about teaching yoga. It is a programme that fulfils its promise in helping you step into your power in all fields of life.

If you see our teachers in the practice room shining with vitality and being energetic leaders in their roles and wish that you could share those traits then *Step into your Power* is for you! At our intensives/trainings we work from the notion that Galileo expressed as: “You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself.”

You have tremendous potential and *Step into your Power* is a process that will help you unlock that potential as a practitioner of asana, as someone pursuing yoga as a way of being, as a teacher, as a spouse, a parent, a mentor or whatever!

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**Step into your Power:**

Make the commitment and BOOK NOW for our Yoga Intensive/Teacher Training called *Step into your Power* in January 2017.

Whether you wish to make advances in your physical yoga practice or learn about meditation or undertake personal growth and development or learn more about anatomy and philosophy as they relate to yoga this program is for you.

For eight days you will engage in an intensive experience of living and breathing and learning yoga as a way of being, all in the beautiful surroundings of Wainui on the Akaroa harbour and in the company of like-minded people undergoing a similar search to yours.

**Dates:** Saturday 14 January to Saturday 21 January 2017 (both dates inclusive).
Venue: YMCA Wainui Park Camp, Wainui, Banks Peninsula.

Cost: $1999.00 including meals and accommodation.

For more information or to get an application form contact Hamish by phone or email (021 0551884 or hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz) or visit www.apollopoweryoga.co.nz and refer to the Yoga Intensive/Teacher Training page of the website.

One of the participants from our last intensive in April 2016 could not have put it better when they said:

*I highly recommend this course! Hamish and Margo are brilliant facilitators and will bring out the best YOU! It will be tough, but trust me; it's well worth it... I [am] very grateful for the massive shift that happened for me on the course and have continued to reap the benefits ever since... and they're still going. DO IT!*

Register NOW and make the commitment to yourself that will cause you to **Step into your Power!**

**40 Days to Personal Revolution:**

There is still time for you to participate in 40 Days to Personal Revolution. Book NOW! The fee is $350 (or $150 if you are an annual member).

During the 40 Days programme from Tuesday **18 October to Tuesday 22 November** there will be **no 6pm PAL90 classes on Tuesday evenings.** We apologise for this inconvenience.

**Drishti:**

During class you will have heard reference made to the term *drishti*. *Drishti* is the yogic gaze where the practitioner settles their eyes to a single point and rests them there. Seemingly, it is a physical action, the movement of the student’s eyes, and one with an outward focus. However, the greatest impact and influence of drishti is internal and at the level of mind.

I have heard of studies suggesting that something in the order of 80% of the external stimuli we receive is taken in through our eyes. Other studies have concluded that there are around 2 million individual stimuli that can be perceived by us through all our senses in any one moment. On that basis, approximately 1.6 million visual stimuli compete for our attention each moment of our day. With so much stimuli available our eyes become not just a tremendous tool for receiving information but also a tremendous vehicle for distraction.

Take a standing balancing pose such as tree pose or standing leg raise for example. If we try to practice such poses with our eyes closed we find it extremely hard to balance for any length of time. We find we need our eyes to help orient us in space and we use the information gained about our surroundings through our eyes to regulate our balance. Similarly, if our eyes are open but are darting about to many different things we are also likely to find it difficult to balance. Distraction from too much stimuli is as harmful to balance as too little information to help us know how we are aligned relative to our environment.

Hence, the cue to use *drishti* – choose a point at which to rest your eyes and use that point as a reference for your balance. By selecting one visual point of reference the student has...
two constants with which to work – the constant of their standing foot at the floor which is unmoving and the constant of their point of visual focus which is unmoving. Anchoring to these two constants aids in balancing.

Is that the sum of it? Does drishti simply help with physical balance and nothing more? No. In fact, that is just the beginning of its use for us as yoga practitioners. The style of yoga in which Apollo Power Yoga are leaders nationally is power vinyasa yoga. Power vinyasa is a style of practice with a great deal of movement in it. We cannot simply pick one point only at which to rest our gaze when moving from tadasana with our arms and eyes raised to the sky, then to uttanasana in a deep forward fold with our eyes at our shins or the wall behind us, then to halfway lift with a straight back and neck and our eyes to the floor in front of our feet, then to high plank, again with our eyes directed to the floor, then low plank with our eyes directed forward towards the front of the room, then to upward facing dog with our eyes either straight forward (as I prefer) or looking up (as some others prefer but be careful with this), and then to downward facing dog with our eyes either at the floor around the centre of our mat or further back towards our feet.

In vinyasa practice our point of drishti is continuously changing. However, the point of focus must be deliberate and conscious with no unnecessary or extraneous movement. Keep your eye movements and the point of drishti focus as simple and natural as possible and geared towards good alignment in your pose. For example, I issued a warning about looking upwards in upward facing dog. I did so because sometimes students drop their heads back in up dog creating excessive compression of the cervical spine which can be very uncomfortable, at the expense of length and upward lift. I prefer that students look forwards in upward facing dog, stretch the back of their necks long and press the back of their heads towards the wall behind them to create a tadasana-like postural attitude.

If you compare the two upward facing dog pictures shown here, the one with drishti forward looks more uplifted, natural and posturally powerful and comfortable than does the one with my head thrown back and my gaze upwards.

A second example relates to when students are in a revolved position. Often they drop their chin towards their chest and turn their drishti towards the back of the room. This brings their neck into flexion (rounded forwards) and initiates a forward rounding of the rest of their spine too. A flexed or rounded back is not as effective nor as safe in twists as a straight spine.
Use your *drishti* to help align your whole body and make the most of the opening of the front side of your torso as you can, even in poses where your torso is turned to the side of the room (extended side angle, revolved crescent lunge, triangle, revolved triangle, half moon, revolved half moon and so on). When turned sideways, set your *drishti* to a point just forward of the front edge of your mat (it does not matter much whether this point is on the floor, the side wall or the ceiling) and use that point of focus to help you elongate the anterior or front side of your spine. Allow the natural inward curves of your lumbar and cervical spine to be present along with the natural outward curves of the sacrum and coccyx and your thoracic spine. Then you will be able to twist freely to the greatest extent and make the most of the pose – all from *drishti*.

*Drishti* has great benefits for mind as well as the orientation and alignment of your body. Think back to the notion of 1.6 million visual stimuli competing for your attention at any one time. That is so much as to be overwhelming. Each stimulus has the potential to trigger a thought and with such an array of potential thoughts one’s mind can be very scattered and distracted. *Drishti* simplifies and clarifies the visual focus and with it, the potential for mental distraction.

In setting your eyes to a point in *drishti*, be incurious about what you are seeing. Avoid allowing your mind to drift into judgment or analysis of what you are seeing. Instead, simply see what you see and turn your mental awareness inward. Put more mental focus on what you feel internally. Wake up to the neglected inner senses and gain more respect and understanding of your body. You will find this process soothing to your nervous system. A calm, meditative state will be possible if you simply rest your eyes at a single point and draw your conscious mind inward. This internal focus is sometimes called the *Shiva netra*, or the eye of Shiva (sometimes, the third eye). Shiva was a great god of Hindu mythology, both a creator and destroyer. Shiva could wreak vengeance and break down those who did wrong but he could also redeem and build up those who were worthy.

Insight and awareness allow you to tear down those aspects of yourself that are damaging or harmful and create or enhance those elements that serve you well and give you vitality and contentment.

Osho had a great saying that resonates with me: “That which diminishes with your awareness is sin. That which grows with your awareness is virtue”. I see that as an expression of *drishti* operating at the level of mind and as an expression of the *Shiva netra*. Out of a confusion of external impressions and outwardly focussed thoughts comes clarity and calm inner awareness. Rather than being stuck in unconscious habitual patterns of thought or behaviour we can choose to be and to act in a way congruent with our heart and our own inner truth. Rather than being concerned with looking good and heavily influenced by others’ opinions of us, we can grow in self-esteem and take our whole way of being from the clarity that comes with insight, with our *drishti* turned inwards.

Use *drishti* during your yoga practice and in your life off your mat to find clarity. You can align your body in asana practice with the aid of *drishti* and you can align your life with the
calm presence that comes from internal focus rather than external distraction. The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* enunciate the eight limbs of yoga. The final three are *dharana* (single-pointed focus), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (enlightened consciousness). *Drishti* as a practice of fixing your eyes to a point and, in consequence, fixing your mind to a point (*eka grata* – single pointed focus) is the gateway to these advanced stages of yoga practice.

**From Baron Baptiste:**

![Asana Spotlight: Chaturanga Dandasana](image1)

**Asana Spotlight: Chaturanga Dandasana**

At Apollo Power Yoga we teach sun salutations that incorporate *chaturanga dandasana* (low plank). We come from the footing that students do not need to be protected from yoga but should be given the opportunity to make as much of their practice as they can. There are enough simplified or dumbed down practices elsewhere for those who prefer to stay ensconced in their comfort zones.

The only issue is that *chaturanga dandasana* is a pose that can be performed in poor alignment with potential adverse consequences. The main misalignments are when students take their shoulders too low relative to their elbows or when students angle their elbows outwards as they lower or when students lose engagement through the midsection of their bodies.

Let us consider good alignment in *chaturanga dandasana*. In *dandasana* (plank pose) the yogi ought to have their hands at shoulder width, their feet at hip width, their heels angled backwards behind the balls of their feet, and their shoulders stacked over their wrists (see picture 1).

From this position the student can rock their heels forward over or in front of the balls of their feet, grip with their fingertips and pull their chest forward of their fingertips, and lower halfway down towards the floor with their elbows bending alongside their body and their shoulder-blades sitting comfortably flat on their back.

In the transition from *dandasana* to *chaturanga dandasana*, lift your chin away from your throat and take your *drishti* forward towards the front of the room. Do not dip your head down towards the floor. A well-aligned chaturanga looks like the image in picture 2.
Key things to notice in the transition from plank (picture 1) to low plank (picture 2) are:

- The position of my heels relative to my toes – rocked forwards.
- The position of my elbows relative to my wrists - unchanged.
- The angle formed by my elbows – from 180° to 90°.
- The attitude of my head – from looking down to looking forward.
- The angle of my pelvis – unchanged from plank to low plank with my tailbone elongated towards my heels.
- Finally, notice the space that I am preserving beneath my body in low plank – my knees, thighs, hips, abdomen and chest have been lowered towards the floor from plank but are engaged and are lifting away from the floor.

Now let us look at some of the common misalignments that occur with low plank.

**Shoulders too low misalignment.** This occurs when the student lacks strength or feels that “low” means “as low as possible” and results in the student’s shoulders being lowered further towards the floor than the height of the student’s elbows (picture 3).

What this does is expose the acromion-clavicular joint (AC joint) to undue stress. The AC joint is the joint where the collarbone (clavicle) sits atop your shoulder (on the upper surface of the acromion process which is an epaulette-like plateau where the shoulder-blade curves forward from the back of your body towards the front of your body and extends outward towards your arm. The AC joint is quite a weak joint. It is protected by a bursa (a sac that provides a protective layer between the skeleton and the skin). Bursae may become inflamed if they are pinched, squeezed, knocked or repetitively stressed.

We know that a forward shoulder position is anatomically unsound in an upright position. It does not cease to be so when horizontal in low plank. Worse, that anatomically unsound position is exacerbated when under the load of low plank. Look to keep your shoulder-blades flat on your back and drawn down your back somewhat, just as you have them in tadasana (mountain pose).

The shoulders too low misalignment in low plank is also often coupled with hips that are too high. This is generally related to the attitude of your pelvis. If there is a tail up angle to your pelvis that will encourage a downward plane from your hips to your shoulders and make your shoulders forward position more pronounced. This attitude to your pelvis also tends to disengage your abdominal lock and invite a sway in your low back. Neither of these characteristics are desirable in low plank. Keep your belly toned, your low back stable and your tailbone elongated towards your heels.

**Drop Head Misalignment:** Some students look to go into low plank by dropping their
head towards the floor (picture 4). This brings their neck into flexion (forward rounding) which is not a good lead into the next pose in the vinyasa, namely, upward facing dog. Dropping your head simply brings your head out of alignment with the rest of your spine. It is typically accompanied by an uncomfortable scrunching inwards and upwards of your shoulder-blades.

Typically the student exhibiting this misalignment does not bend their elbows (elbows at a 90° angle is an essential element of low plank) or, if they do, their elbows bend outwards, away from their sides rather than alongside their ribcage as is recommended.

There are two answers to this misalignment. First, if you are able, focus on reaching your tailbone towards your heels and drawing your pubic bone towards your navel as you lower into chaturanga dandasana. These actions will ensure that uddiyana bandha, the abdominal lock, is engaged. If your pelvis tips forward you lose uddiyana bandha and without it the uplift of your midsection is lost as well. Reach your tailbone towards your heels and marry low back strength with abdominal strength so that the mid-section of your body is light and buoyant.

Well Modified Low Plank: The second option is to modify chaturanga dandasana as shown in picture 6 by placing your knees at the floor but otherwise keeping your hips, thighs and belly lifted. Lower your knees to the floor, keep your hips lifted, and bend your elbows alongside your torso to right angles.

This modified form will engage all the necessary muscle groups to prepare you for the full expression of chaturanga dandasana but will reduce the intensity of the pose for

Mid-section Collapse Misalignment: In this misalignment, the student allows their hips and abdomen to drop towards the floor and lower in greater proportion than their chest and shoulders (picture 5).

The principal cause for this misalignment is a lack of core strength, both abdominal and low back. Notice in picture 5 how low my pelvis is towards the floor compared with my chest. Then compare the relative heights of my pelvis and chest in picture 2.

The transition from high- to low plank is a forward as well as a downward movement. If the downward movement is confined to your head and there is no forward movement, then you are poorly set up in low plank.

Rather than looking down and dropping your head down towards the floor in low plank, make one of the first actions you take in transition from high plank to low, the lifting of your chin away from your throat and the shift of your drishti gaze forward towards the front of the room (picture 2). This sets you up for the transition into upward facing dog.
you and allow you to be in good form. You ought to favour good form with less depth over poor form with extra depth.

In taking a series of photos for this piece with poor low plank alignment I found it hard work on my back and shoulders. **Good alignment makes the pose easier!** If you have no idea what you look like in low plank and whether you are in poor alignment, get a friend or family member to take a picture for you and compare what you see with the images in this article. If necessary, look to make the shifts in alignment that will transform your low plank from misaligned misery to aligned power.

Hamish also offers private lessons where we can use a video camera and show you what is happening in your transitions to help inform your awareness and therefore your growth as a practitioner.

**Yoga Clothing to Borrow:**

Please be aware that in the event you forget an item of clothing to practice in, or you decide on a whim to come in for a class but have no yoga clothing with you, or you suffer a wardrobe malfunction, we have a collection of men’s and women’s yoga clothes that you may borrow.

If you do use our spare clothing please return the items to us at reception after class. We prefer to do the laundry.

Please also ensure you do return the item(s) of clothing. We have had a few pieces go missing over time and it is always disappointing when someone abuses a privilege and steals something. It is so un-yogic – go to the Sutras, check out the yamas, and refer to Asteya: do not take that which is not freely given.

**And the Winner Is...**

The winner of our Lucia Natural Skin Care draw is **FEBBIE SANGKOP**. Thanks to our yogi **Erith Boyd**, owner of Lucia, for donating the prize for the draw. And thanks to Febbie and everyone else who shared our facebook post about this.
Apollo Yogis in Business - Tania Behrns

Apollo yogi Tania Behrns owns Beauty and Medispa business EMBRAYCE, providing organic natural-based facial treatments using whole plants, and nutritional advice to create skin health from the inside out. EMBRAYCE offers a wide range of facial treatments, as well as peels, collagen induction therapy, massage, spray tans, special occasion make-up, eyelash extensions, treatments for hands and feet, and hair removal.

Embrayce will be having a Client Evening, to which all Apollo yogis are invited, on Monday 3 October from 5:30pm. The evening will be a special occasion to introduce Embrayce’s new treatment, SHR & IPL combining rejuvenation and pain-free hair removal and LED photodynamic skin therapy.

Leslie Kenton Smith, award-winning novelist, broadcaster, lecturer, nutritionist and teacher will the Guest Speaker for the evening.

If you wish to attend, RSVP to Tania: 03 374 2345 or beauty@embrayce.co.nz

And this is what they’re saying about…..

Tattoo Removal Company

We’ve mentioned in an earlier edition that our yogi Tracette Owers has started the Tattoo Removal Company. This is what her clients are saying: “Coming from a professional work environment, I was very conscious about keeping a business image. Although at the time I had it done, I thought my tattoo was amazing, it has now become a part of me that I hide. I had always wondered about getting it removed but thought it would be too expensive and painful. The Tattoo Removal Company has made this process very easy for me. Not only is the removal affordable it is no more painful than when I had the tattoo put on. After one treatment the results were amazing. I highly recommend the Tattoo Removal Company – great service, great results.” - Jackie Henry, Licenced Real Estate Agent.

The Tattoo Removal Company is a family business; Tracette’s partner Grant and her daughter Paris have also undertaken extensive and ongoing training as tattoo removal technicians, keeping their skills up to date. They provide a friendly, focussed, professional service, taking the time to understand their clients’ needs, relevant medical history, and the history of the tattoo to be removed.

The q-switch laser used by TRC removes tattoos effectively and with minimal pain or discomfort by emitting nanosecond energy pulses which penetrate the skin tissue and shatter the ink pigment into fragments small enough to be eliminated through the body’s own lymphatic system.

TRC is offering a special, time-limited discount to Apollo yogis. Grab one of their cards in the Apollo change rooms to get 17% off of your first 3 treatments.

Namaste

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