

## ***The Supporting Lotus: Developing Pelvic Floor Awareness***

*When your pelvic floor is in good health it's like a trampoline slung across the pelvic outlet from front to back & attaching to the inside of the sitting bones. It supports the pelvic & abdominal organs above & resists the downward pull of gravity from below. These muscles need to bear the pressures that occur when we breathe, laugh, cough, sneeze, lift heavy weight, strain or give birth. The pelvic floor is the main supporting structure for your uterus. During pregnancy, hormonal softening throughout the body affects these muscles. This will help during birth but may weaken the support of the pelvic floor which must bear the increasing weight of your uterus in pregnancy.*

*Use these practices throughout your pregnancy – they are more about developing awareness & familiarity: little & often is the wisest approach. Do 5 or 6 cycles as you remember: always involve holistic awareness of breath, rhythm & energy.*

### ***Locating the Pelvic Floor***

*For exploring different parts of the pelvic floor, it's best to relieve the downward pressure of weight off the pelvic floor by resting forward, knees in a wide in kneeling position with soft support under your head to feel comfortable. You can have your head level with your hips or higher for comfort. Alternatively you can straddle a bolster and/or shift between the kneeling head/down position & the supported straddle.*

*Use the Full Yogic Breath at a pace & rhythm that allows for lifts, squeezes & release to flow gently with the breath. Go at your own pace; feel comfortable & relaxed with your natural breath rhythm as it paces your exploration.*

### ***Sahajoli Mudra***

*The first element of this practice draws energy to the very front part of the pelvic floor working muscles closest to your pubic bone.*

*Establish a movement of awareness up & down the spine as you breathe. Breathing in, attention is drawn from the base of your spine to the crown of your head. Breathing out awareness travels back down again.*

*Continue this synchronized rhythm of breath & awareness for a few cycles until it feels natural & easy.*

- Then, as you breathe out bring your awareness down to the base of your spine, move your attention forward to your pubic bone. If sitting on support, tilt slightly forward until you feel slight pressure toward the front of the pelvic floor.*
- Then, with your awareness at the front of your pelvic floor, as you breathe in, squeeze tight the muscles that would stop an imaginary flow of urine. As you breathe out release these muscles. Sense how this releases the imaginary flow.*
- Continue for a few more rounds of easy rhythmic breathing keeping your awareness at the front of the pelvic floor, squeezing as you inhale & releasing as you exhale.*

*Everything else is relaxed & still, your face, jaw, neck, abdomen & buttocks.*

### ***Ashwini Mudra***

*Move as you need to ensure that you are comfortable.*

*Reestablish a movement of awareness up & down your spine in time with your breath. Find your natural rhythm as your awareness moves from the base of your spine to the crown of your head and back down again. Come into an easy natural rhythm.*

- Then, exhale & bring your awareness down to the base of your spine, let your awareness rest here at the very back of your pelvic floor. If you are sitting with support, shift your weight slightly back 'til you can feel pressure toward the back of the pelvic floor.*
- Then with your awareness at the back of the pelvic floor breathe in & squeeze the muscles around the anus. Once you can feel the ring of muscle closing exhale & release.*
- Continue for a few more rounds of easy rhythmic breath, keeping your awareness at the back of the pelvic floor, squeezing as you inhale & releasing as you exhale.*

*Everything else is relaxed & still, your face, jaw, neck, abdomen & buttocks.*

## ***Sahajoli & Ahwini Mudras: the Front & Back***

*Know that the squeezes & releases of Sahajoli & Ashwini Mudras mark out the very front & back of your pelvic floor. These practices give you a way to locate the full spread of the pelvic floor. If you are sitting on support you can roll forwards to the Sahajoli place at the front: squeeze & release, then roll back to the Ashwini place at the back: squeeze & release.*

*Aware of the distance between the front & back pelvic floor, know that for the birth of your baby the most important place to put your energy, your breath & your awareness is right in the middle, between these two places.*

## ***Mula Bandha: the Root Lock***

*Move as you need to ensure that you are comfortable.*

*Move your awareness up & down your spine as you breathe. Find your natural rhythm as your awareness moves from the base of your spine to the crown of your head and back down again. Come into an easy natural rhythm.*

- *Then, exhaling bring your awareness to the middle of the pelvic floor. Breathe in & draw up the vaginal walls. Feel first the outer, then deeper layers of pelvic floor muscles moving in & up, feeling more of a lift then as squeeze as you near the end of the inhale.*
- *Follow your natural breath rhythm, lifting up as high as feels comfortable, then as you are ready to exhale, release the lift, let go, down into the support of the earth.*
- *Continue following the natural rhythm of your breath with ease, continuing this lifting & lowering movement: breathing in & moving up, breathing out & lowering down.*
- *Continue for a few more cycles of easy rhythmic breath, keeping your awareness at the center of your pelvic floor, inhaling, squeezing & lifting muscles; exhaling, releasing muscles.*

*Everything else is relaxed & still, your face, jaw, neck, abdomen & buttocks.*