

Finding Deep Release in Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Fold)

When I first started doing yoga asanas, I remember my teacher telling me I must have been a yogi in a past life as the poses came so naturally to me.

It wasn't that I was the most flexible student, but he noticed in me a true dedication and passion for the experience and how even the first time learning an asana series, I seemed to intuitively know what to do.

I found great relief in many of these poses, and always felt a great lightness when the practice was over. Most people have one or two poses that are difficult to master. This is no different for me, even after all these years of practice.

Even though I'm not really very good at it, in terms of gently gliding my forehead to my shin, I love Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Fold). I love it because it gives me a sweet relief, even if bittersweet, that very few things in life can.

I humbly bow down in this pose because when I really get into it, an emotional tightness is released and, at those times, tears flow from my eyes, down my shins and drip to my mat. Tears likely come from the primitive gestalt; with my head bowed, I let go of the past and stretch into the future, while being aware in that very moment.

After you have warmed up with a few Sun Salutations, sit in [Dandasana](#). Bring the flesh away from your sits bones and get really grounded. Keep your feet flexed, legs straight and thighs activated, shoulders back, and belly pulled in toward the spine. As you reach forward, hold your big toes with your thumb and forefingers, or wrap your palms around the sides of

your feet.

For the first few breaths, your gaze is on your big toes. With each inhalation stretch your spine longer, bringing the crown of your head farther from your sits bones. On the exhale, fold down a little further. After you've done this 3-4 times, keeping your back as straight as possible, on your next exhale, allow your forehead to come to rest on your shins.

Of course if this is the first time you are doing this pose, you may not make it that far. That's ok. Fold down as far as you comfortably can. And breathe. Allow yourself to relax but also keep engaged. Remember to keep your shoulders relaxed and your back straight. Breathe here for at least 5 full breaths, then on an inhale lengthen your torso upward slowly and on the exhale release your hands and come to sit.

The intense stretch that this pose gives to your entire body helps improve digestion by stimulating the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and uterus; it soothes headaches and anxiety as well as reduces fatigue; it helps keep blood pressure down, insomnia at bay, helps relieve mild depression; and more.

[source](#)

This amazing pose can bring you a deep sense of inner calm.