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LIFESTYLE

Nap less to stay alert

Napping frequently during daytime could be an early sign of dementia, or may even prompt it, say neurologists.

French researchers who looked at results from 5,000 people over 65 years found the fifth who regularly took long naps scored lower in mental ability tests, according to the *Telegraph*. IANS

Seaside living healthier



LIVING ON THE seaside could help us in leading a healthy life, suggests a British study which found individuals living near the coast tend to be healthier than those who set up home further inland.

While analysing data from the 2001 census, British scientists compared how healthy respondents said they were with how near to the sea they lived, *Daily Mail* reported.

Researchers from the European Centre for Environment and Human Health observed that, on average, the closer we live to the sea, the more likely we are to report good health.

Study lead author Ben Wheeler said: "We know that people usually have a good time when they go to the beach, but there is strikingly little evidence of how spending time at the coast can affect health and well-being." IANS

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YOGA

Upavista Konasana is the Sanskrit name for the Seated Angle pose. Upavista means seated and kona means angle. Upavista Konasana is a wide-angle seated forward bend, good for detoxifying the kidneys. This asana is good preparation for most of the seated forward bends and twists, as well as the wide-leg standing poses.

TECHNIQUE

- Sit in Dandasana, then lean your torso back slightly on your hands and open your legs to an angle of about 90 degrees (the legs should form an approximate right angle). Press your hands against the floor and slide your buttocks forward, widening the legs another 10 to 20 degrees. As with Dandasana, if you can't sit comfortably on the floor, raise your buttocks on a folded blanket.

- Move your thighs outwardly, pinning the outer thighs against the floor, so that the knee caps point toward the ceiling. Reach out through your heels and stretch your soles, pressing through the balls of the feet.

- With your thigh bones pressed heavily into the floor and your knee caps pointing up at the ceiling, walk your hands forward between your legs. As with all forward bends, the emphasis is on moving from the hip joints and maintaining the stretch of the front torso.

- Bend forward a little bit more on each exhalation until you feel a comfortable stretch in the backs of your legs. Stay



in the pose for a minute or longer. Then come up as you inhale.

BENEFITS

This asana helps stretch the

inner thighs and tones the legs; it helps strengthen the spine and stimulates the abdominal organs. It is believed the pose calms the brain and can reduce sciatic pain.

Avoid if you suffer from slipped disc.

Sumit Manav, Lifestyle Yoga
(info@lifestyleyoga.ae)

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Breathe in... and out

Many philosophies and worldviews believe that everything around us is made up of four elements - fire, earth, air and water. Fire is normally associated with passion or heat within the body. Water on the other hand affects our emotions. Earth denotes stability and growth. While the most important of all air, controls the energy within our body and enhances spiritual growth. So how important is air to us? The first thing that a newborn does is breathe in and cry. Breathing is the only activity that one continues to do without any effort. It is the essence of our existence and key to stress-free living.

I first learnt how to meditate years ago in the quiet little village of Rishikesh, in the Himalayan foothills. I lived in an ashram, a community living concept where one must work within the community and learn spiritual practices. As I spent more and more time there, something inside me changed. I became more aware of my surroundings and my life. I was eating and sleeping better. But most importantly I was not angry anymore. However now I am back to the hustle and bustle of the city life and the challenge is to maintain inner calm that I had once acquired in the peaceful haven of Rishikesh.

And so every time you are feeling anxious and depressed, take a few moments out of your busy schedule and slow down your breathing. Keep breathing in at the count of 10 and breathing out at the count of 20. Listen to some soothing music and light your favourite incense. By creating your own little peaceful corner at home or office, you are telling your mind that it is time to switch off. If you have difficulty crossing your legs and sitting, try lying down or sitting on a chair. Just close your eyes for a few minutes, take a break from technology, and let your mind be free.

Practicing creative visualisation helps in reducing stress and gives you that much needed instant calm after a long stressful day. Close your eyes and imagine walking on wet green grass and savour the smell of damp mud or feel your body being surrounded by beautiful white light washing away all the stress. Be creative and pick scenery that helps you relax and reduce stress. Everyday spend 15 minutes focusing on your breath. And as you practice meditation more and more you will realise that your breathing will eventually take over and before you know it, you will be floating effortlessly in the white light.

Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers unique and effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall well-being

