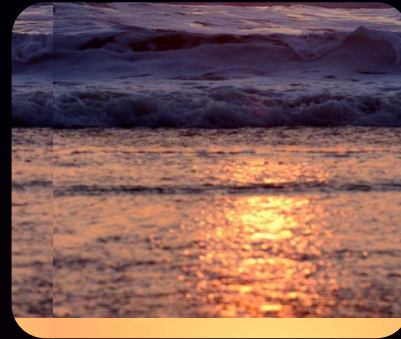


Restorative Yoga

White Crow Yoga



Course Objectives



Understand concepts and benefits of restorative yoga

Discuss the history of restorative yoga

Understand sequencing for restorative yoga

Devise strategies for making restorative poses accessible to all body types

Practice restorative yoga

If Yoga is a Buffet....

Restorative Yoga is Dessert ☺

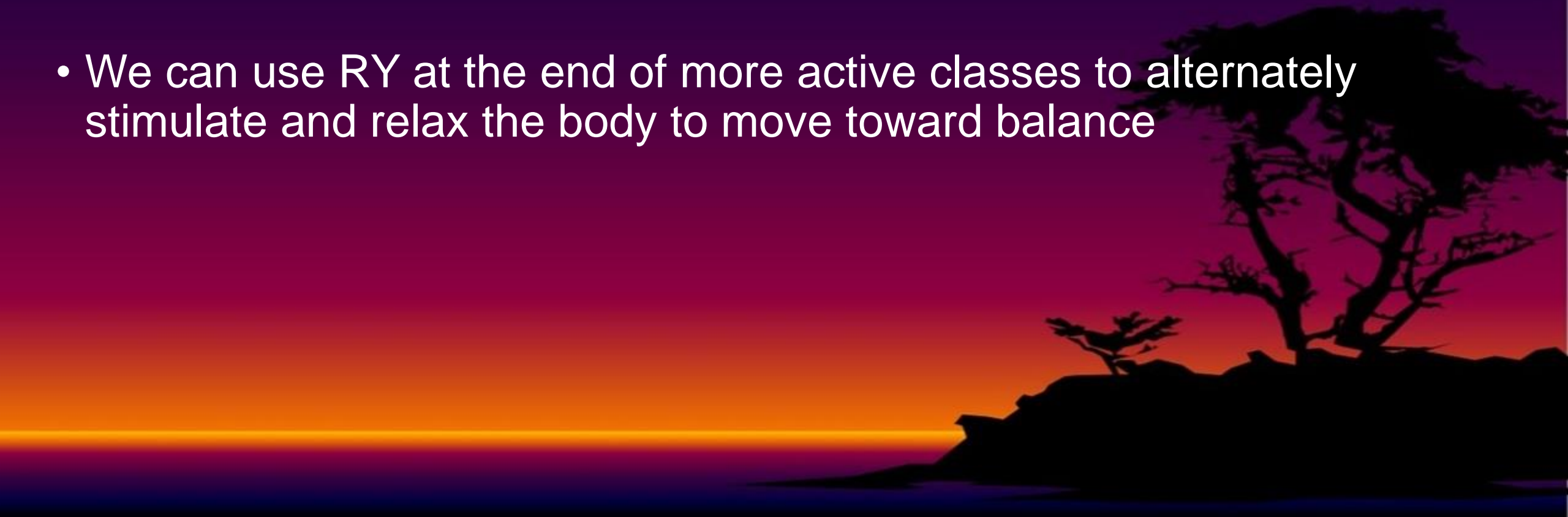


Restorative Yoga: Concepts and Benefits

- Restorative Yoga (RY) is **characterized by long-held, relaxing postures** and the use of **props**
- Focus of RY is on **relaxation and stress reduction**, although the body may also get some **gentle stretch**, it is **more about releasing the muscles than stretching**
- RY can provide benefits to the back by **moving the spine in all directions**. 75-85% of all Americans experience back pain at some point in their lives.
- **Stress reduction** is usually cited as the main benefit of RY, as it invokes our **parasympathetic nervous system** (relaxation response)

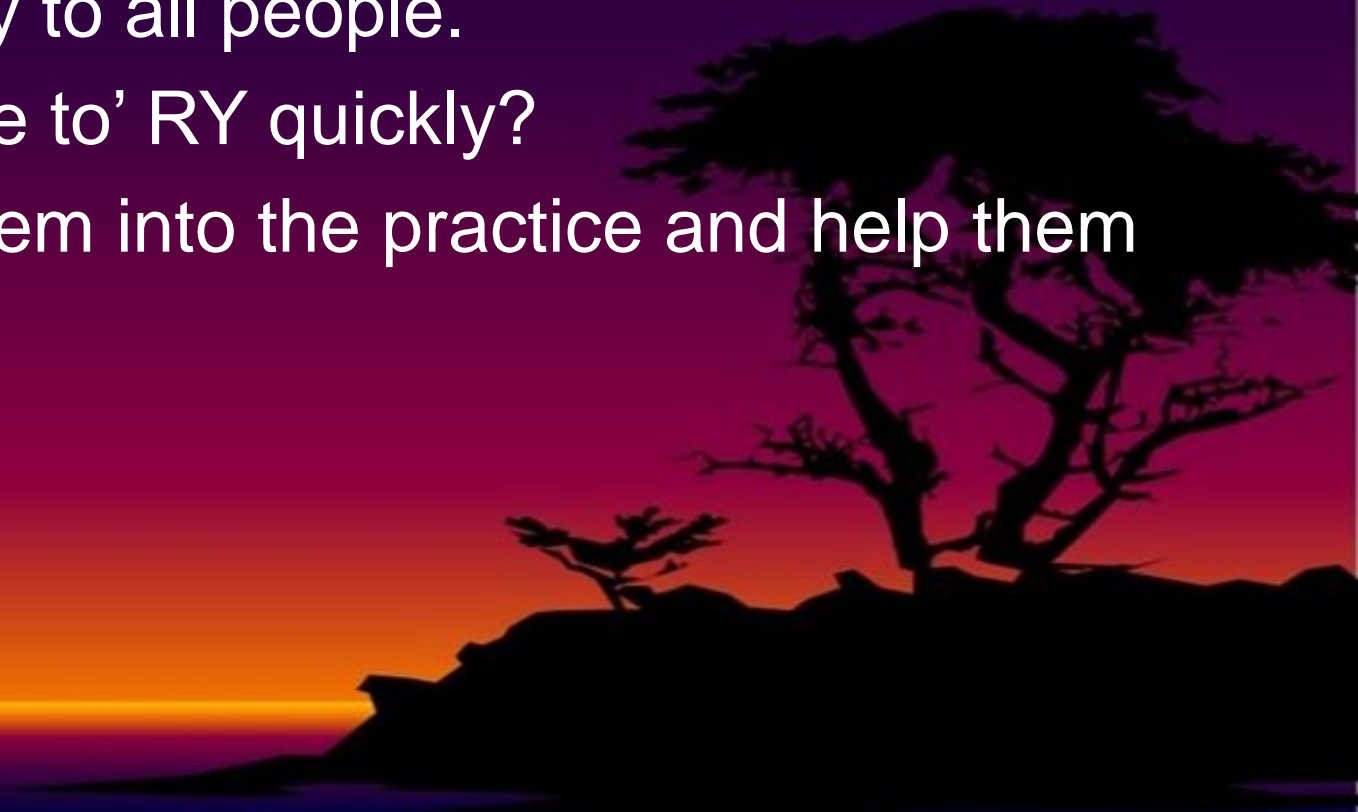
Restorative Yoga: Concepts and Benefits

- RY dramatically alters **hormone levels**, thus **reducing brain arousal, blood pressure, and fluid retention** (Roger Cole, Ph.D.)
- RY poses offer an opportunity for more stillness, quiet, and opportunity for more breath work, reflection or meditation
- We can use RY at the end of more active classes to alternately stimulate and relax the body to move toward balance



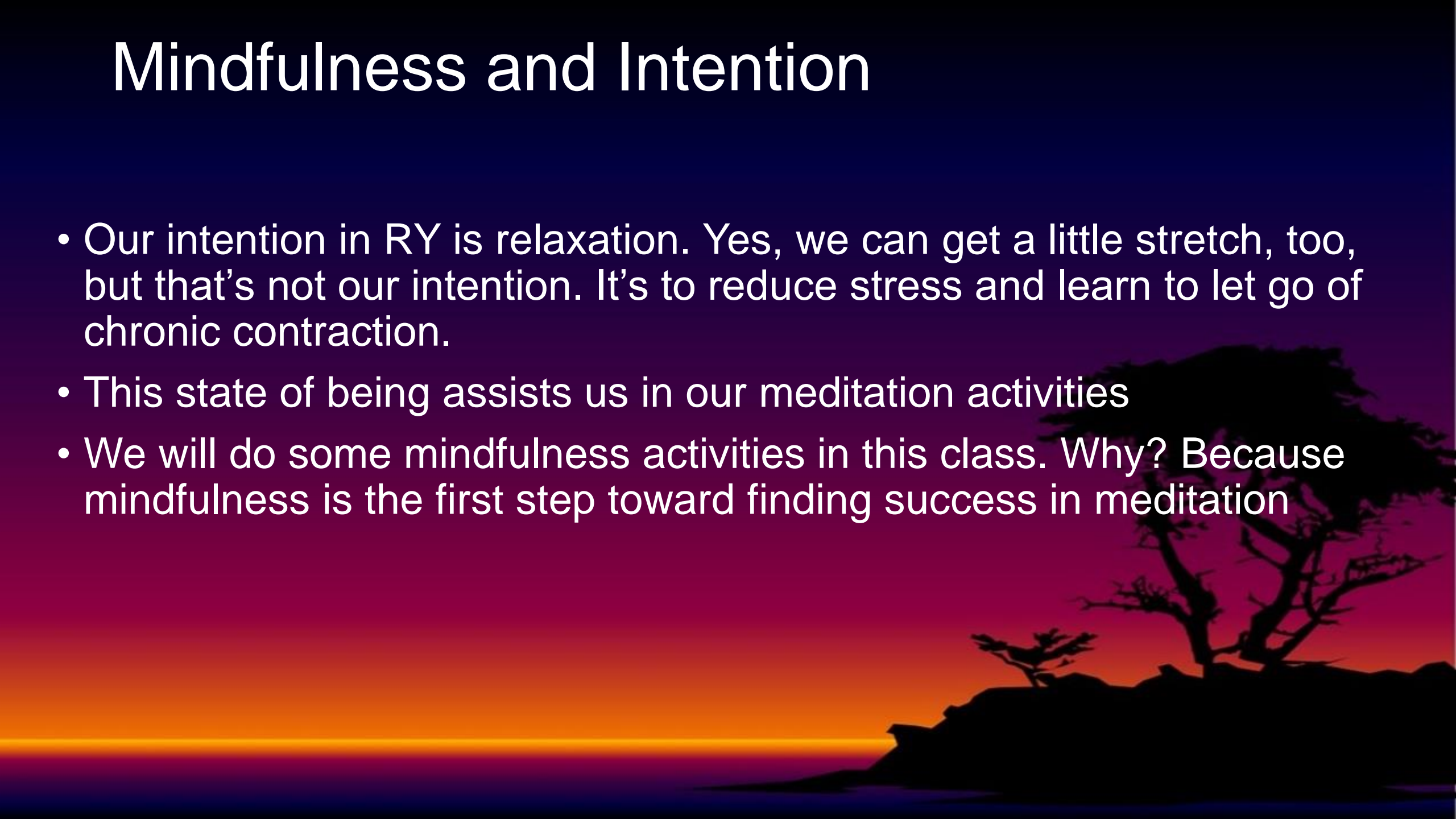
Art of Relaxation

- Relaxation really is an art in a way! We have to hone our craft by practicing it.
- Relaxation does not come easily to all people.
- Who do you think might not 'take to' RY quickly?
- What can we do to help ease them into the practice and help them learn to enjoy it?



Mindfulness and Intention

- Our intention in RY is relaxation. Yes, we can get a little stretch, too, but that's not our intention. It's to reduce stress and learn to let go of chronic contraction.
- This state of being assists us in our meditation activities
- We will do some mindfulness activities in this class. Why? Because mindfulness is the first step toward finding success in meditation



Gentle vs Restorative

You might see some poses in the text we are using and think “Those are gentle, but not restorative.” It depends on how you view it.

In Thirumoolar’s, we would only put these “gentle” poses at the beginning or toward the end of a sequence (If we use them at all; many sequences don’t contain any of these; we tend to use more traditional restorative poses that rely on bolsters, and full relaxation of the body)

It is not wrong to put them in the middle of the flow.
We choose not to for greater relaxation during this time.

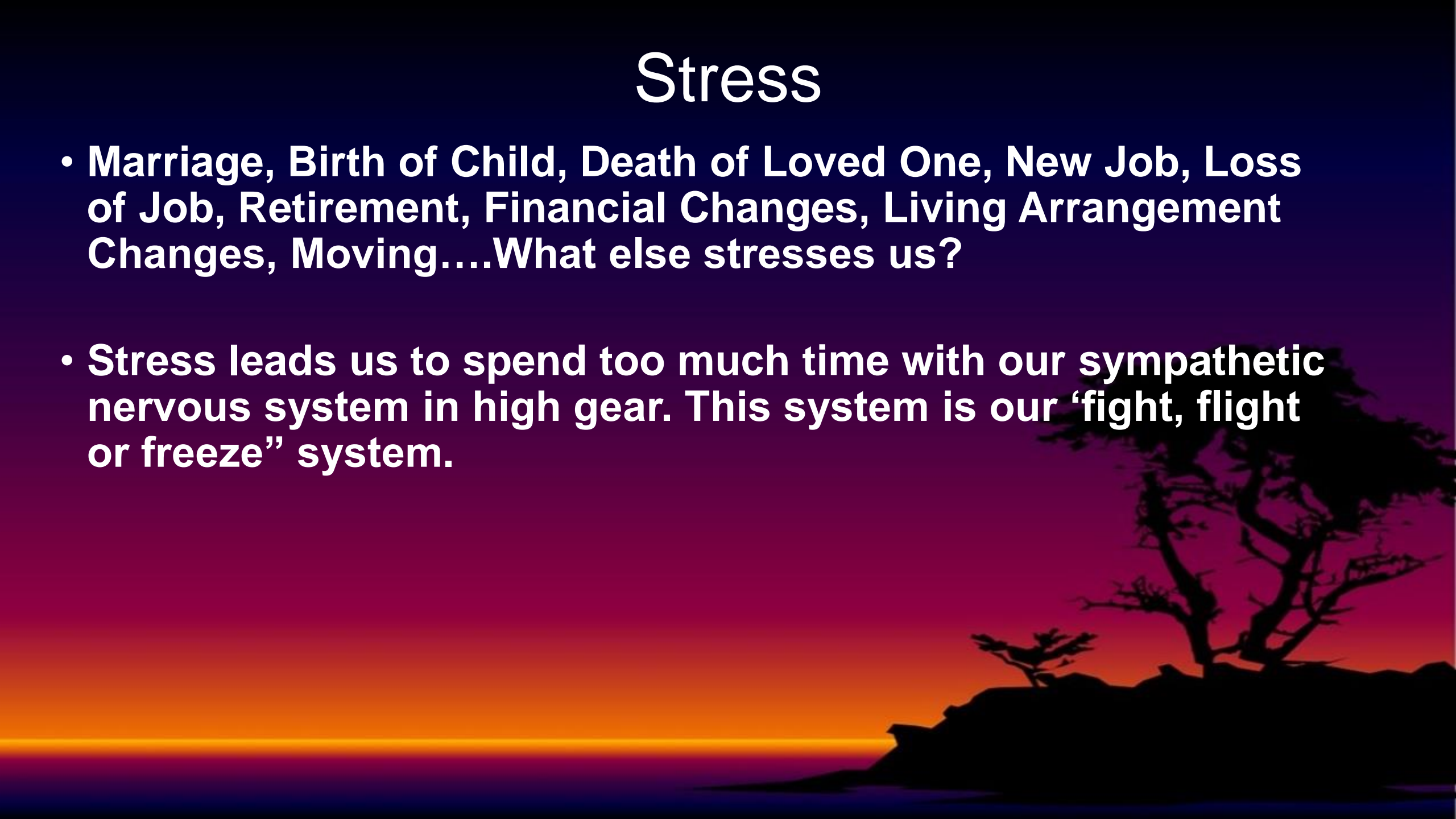


Restorative Yoga: Concepts and Benefits

- ***Prana***, the masculine energy, resides above the diaphragm, **moves upward**, and controls respiration and heart rate. ***Apana***, the feminine energy, resides below the diaphragm, **moves downward**, and controls the function of the abdominal organs. **Restorative yoga balances these two aspects of energy so that the practitioner is neither overstimulated nor depleted.**
- Many RY sequences include an **inversion**, which allows fluid to be returned to the upper body, enhancing **heart function**.
- RY alternately stimulates and soothes the organs. By alternating forward and backbends, the organs are compressed and released, which enhances the **exchange of oxygen and waste products across the cell membranes**.

Stress

- **Marriage, Birth of Child, Death of Loved One, New Job, Loss of Job, Retirement, Financial Changes, Living Arrangement Changes, Moving....What else stresses us?**
- **Stress leads us to spend too much time with our sympathetic nervous system in high gear. This system is our ‘fight, flight or freeze’ system.**



Stress

- Stress begins with a physiological response to what your mind-body perceives as **dangerous or harmful** – it might or might not actually be dangerous/harmful.
- For example, slow traffic is not usually dangerous/harmful but simply **annoying**. **Over time, we have conditioned our mind-body to automatically go into “dangerous/harmful” mode**, which kicks our physiological response into stress mode.
- Why? Maybe bad traffic led to us being late to work in the past, which caused us to be fearful of losing our job (harmful). This conditioned response continues, even if we are not on our way to work (unless we work to better handle our stress through yoga and other mind/body modalities)

Stress

- Another example of how we condition ourselves to kick into Fight or Flight Mode: Your boss increasingly calls you into his office and belittles you or threatens your job. It all starts with a phone call to his office. **Eventually, hearing the phone ring stresses you because you are subconsciously fearful** that it's the start of another session with your boss.
- Eventually, seeing your boss in the hallway becomes stressful, even if he is just saying good morning. Later, **you start dreading the office** even when you're at home.
- At some point, your **body begins to stay on Chronic Stress mode.**

What May Accompany Stress?

- Irritation
- Frustration
- Anger
- Depression
- Destructive Behaviors (drugs, alcohol, etc.)
- Physical Illness including headaches, indigestion, gastrointestinal issues
- What else?

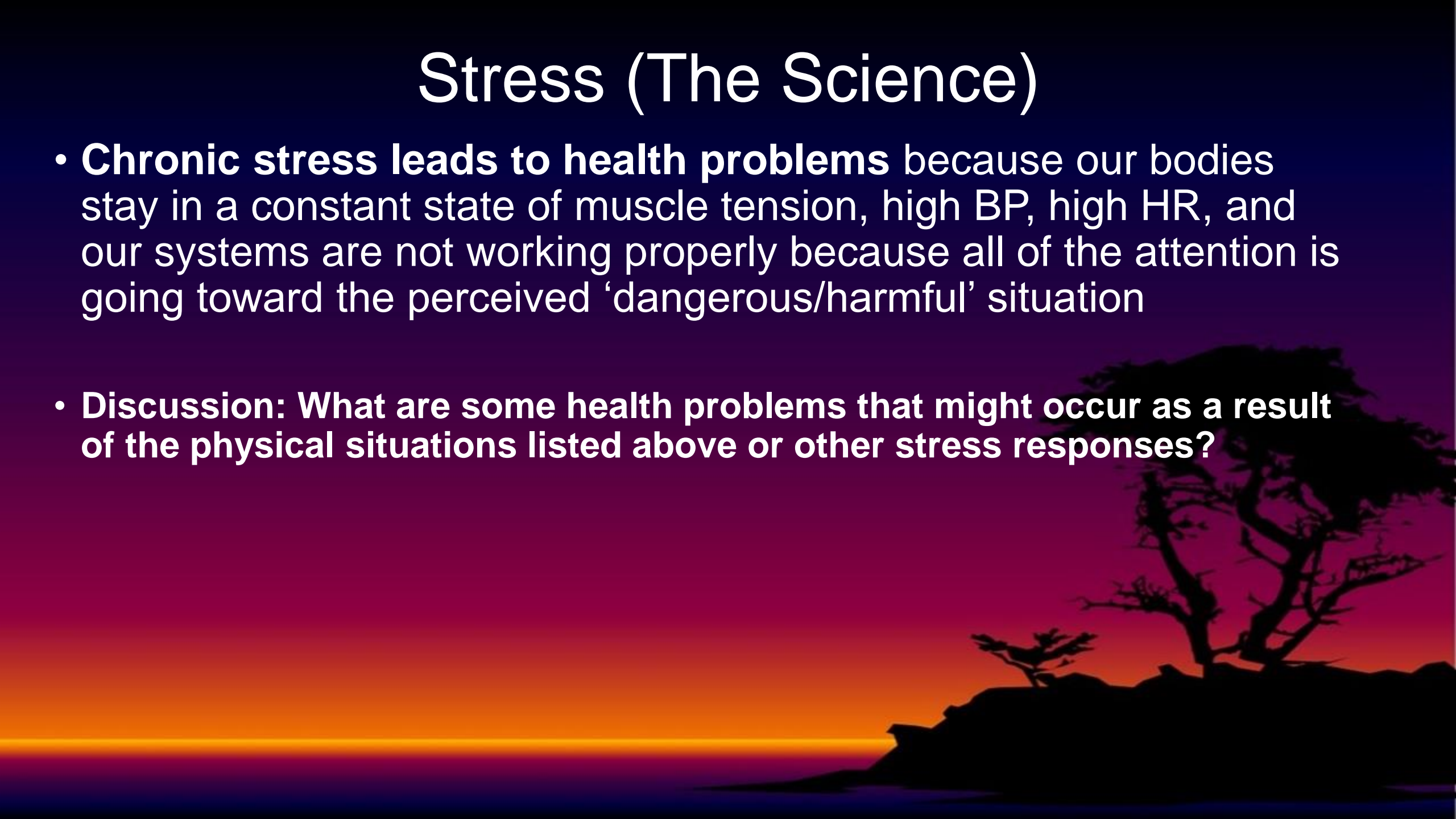


What Happens During Stress (The Science)?

- **Mind alerts the body** that danger is present
- **Adrenal Glands** secrete adrenaline and noradrenalin that act upon ANS* to **prepare for Fight or Flight** (*autonomic nervous system)
- Increases **HR, BP, mental alertness and muscle tension**
- Adrenal glands cause **metabolic changes** that make energy stores available to all cells and body begins to sweat
- **Body shuts down** systems that are not a priority in the moment, including **digestion, elimination, growth repair and reproduction** and **sleep is disturbed**, leading to **chronic fatigue**
- **Each of these systems being 'down' eventually leads to health issues**

Stress (The Science)

- **Chronic stress leads to health problems** because our bodies stay in a constant state of muscle tension, high BP, high HR, and our systems are not working properly because all of the attention is going toward the perceived 'dangerous/harmful' situation
- **Discussion: What are some health problems that might occur as a result of the physical situations listed above or other stress responses?**



Antidote to Stress

- “The antidote to stress is relaxation”. (Judith Lasater)
- Relaxation is different from sleep
- Deep states of sleep (including periods of dreaming) may increase muscular tension and other physiological signs of tension
- Relaxation is a state where there is a quiet brain with no movement or effort
- “Restorative poses are poses of being rather than doing”. (Judith Lasater)

RY Benefits – How RY Works (The Science)

- **Decreases stress:** Invokes the **parasympathetic nervous system**, allowing the body to **reverse the physiological changes that occur with stress**
- **Relaxes the body** with deep breathing and supported stretches
- Induces a **'relaxation response'** defined by Herbert Benson, M.D., as **"a physiological state characterized by a slower heart rate, metabolism, rate of breathing, lower blood pressure, and slower brain wave patterns."**

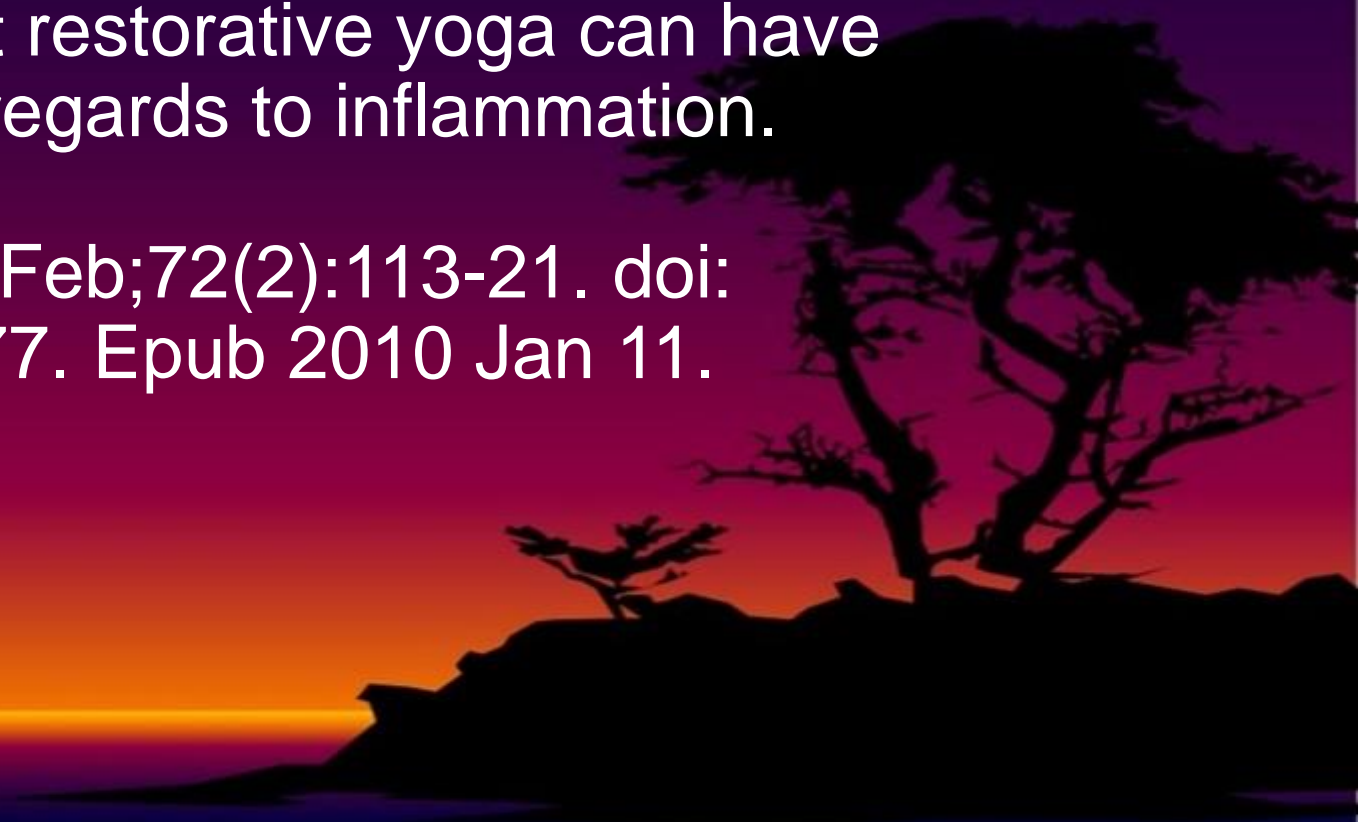
RY Benefits – How RY Works

- RY may enable yogis to **handle stressful situations** with less impact to their health (positive thinking and invokes healing parasympathetic nervous system)
- RY may help us create a deeper **mind/body connection**
- **Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)**, also referred to as **Psychoendoneuroimmunology (PENI)** is the **study of the interaction** between **psychological** processes and the **nervous, immune and endocrine** systems of the human body and the relationship between **mental processes and physical health**
- Through PNI and PENI, we understand that RY helps **keep all body systems healthy**

Studies of RY (The Science)

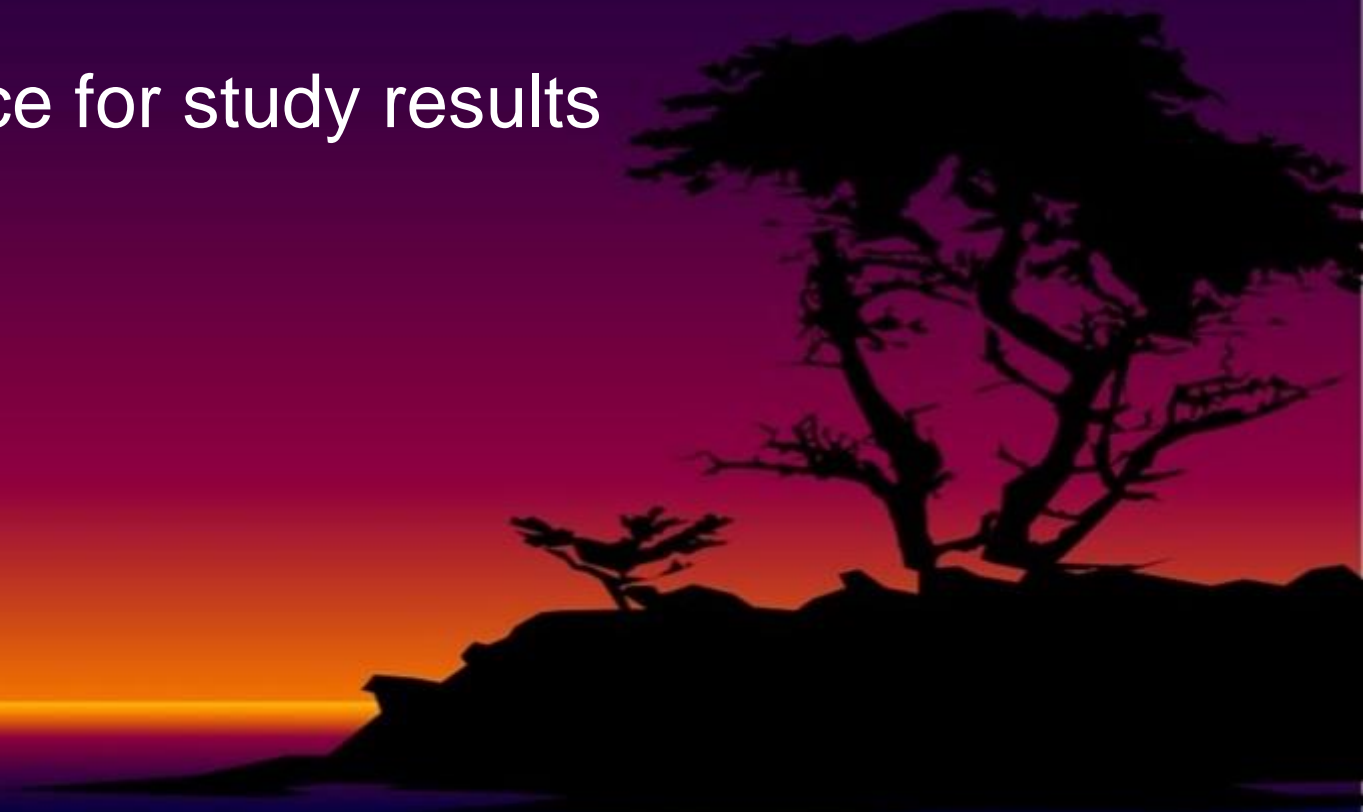
- **Studies** indicate RY to be helpful in **combating stress responses**.
- One study confirms that stress **influences inflammatory responses** in the body, and that restorative yoga can have substantial health benefits with regards to inflammation.

Source: [Psychosom Med](#). 2010 Feb;72(2):113-21. doi: 10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181cb9377. Epub 2010 Jan 11.



Studies of RY

- There are many other studies that indicate RY may be beneficial for a multitude of disorders including back pain, cancer, mental illness, heart disease and even weight loss.
- [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) is one resource for study results



History of Restorative Yoga

- Development of Restorative Poses credit to B.K.S. Iyengar, of Pune, India.

B.K.S. Iyengar

- Recognized need for gentler yoga with props
- Explored recovery from illness and injury using RY

Judith Lasater

- Expanded upon Iyengar's teachings
- Popularized RY in the West

White Crow Yoga's RY

- Thirumoolar's Therapeutic Influence
- Desikachar's ViniYogaTherapy Influence

Iyengar – Authority on RY

- Traditionally, yoga classes and home practices begin with active postures followed by a brief restorative posture or two. The development of restorative postures is largely credited to B.K.S. Iyengar, of Pune, India.
- Iyengar (1918-2014) taught yoga for more than sixty years and was widely recognized as a worldwide authority.
- Iyengar's early teaching experience revealed how pain or injury can result from a student straining in a yoga pose. To alleviate this, he experimented with "props," modifying each pose to each student's body such that the student could practice without strain.

(Source: Chrys Kub)

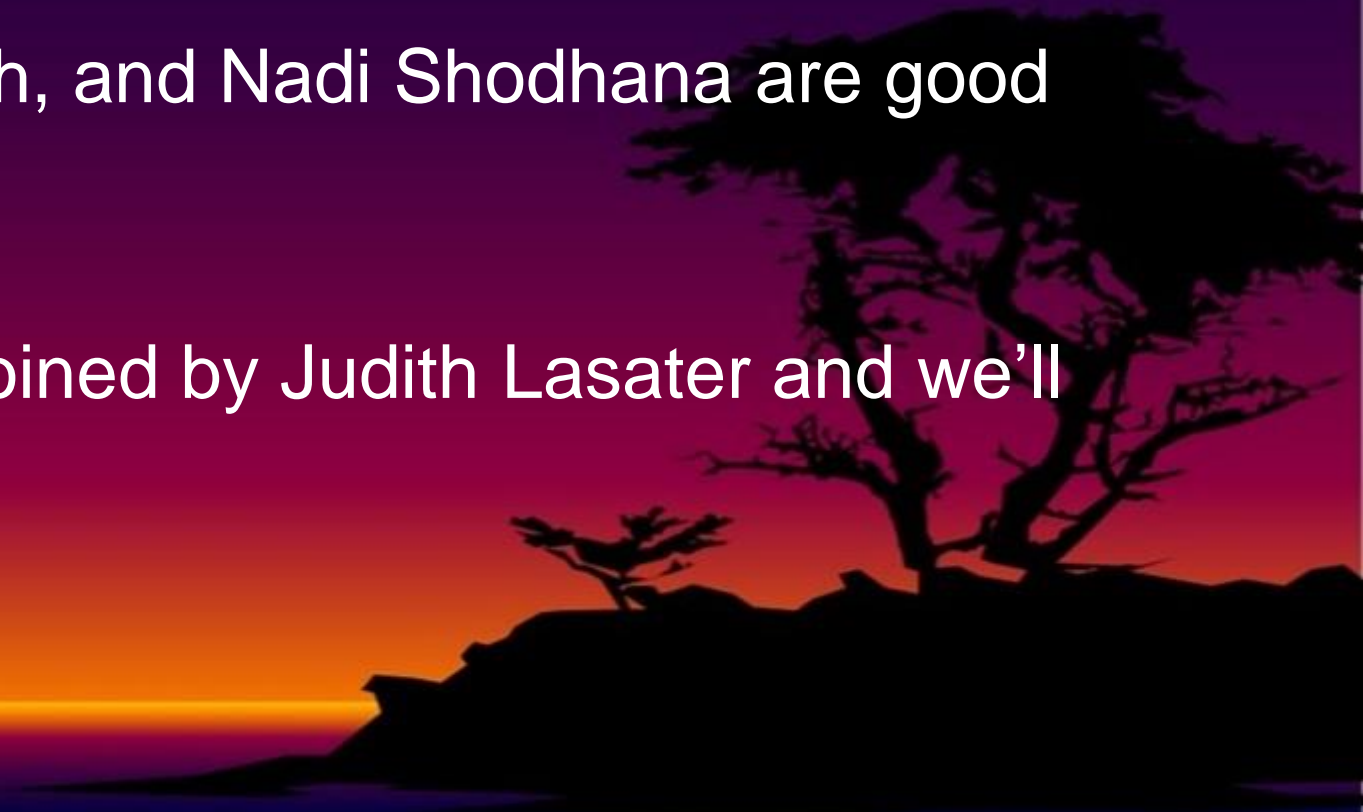
RY Class Props

Most Common	Also Used
Bolsters	Chairs
Straps	Walls
Blankets	Small beaded bags (for hands) – ‘wrist rest’
Blocks	Warm Towels
Eye Bags	Candles
Sand Bags	Essential Oils



Pranayama

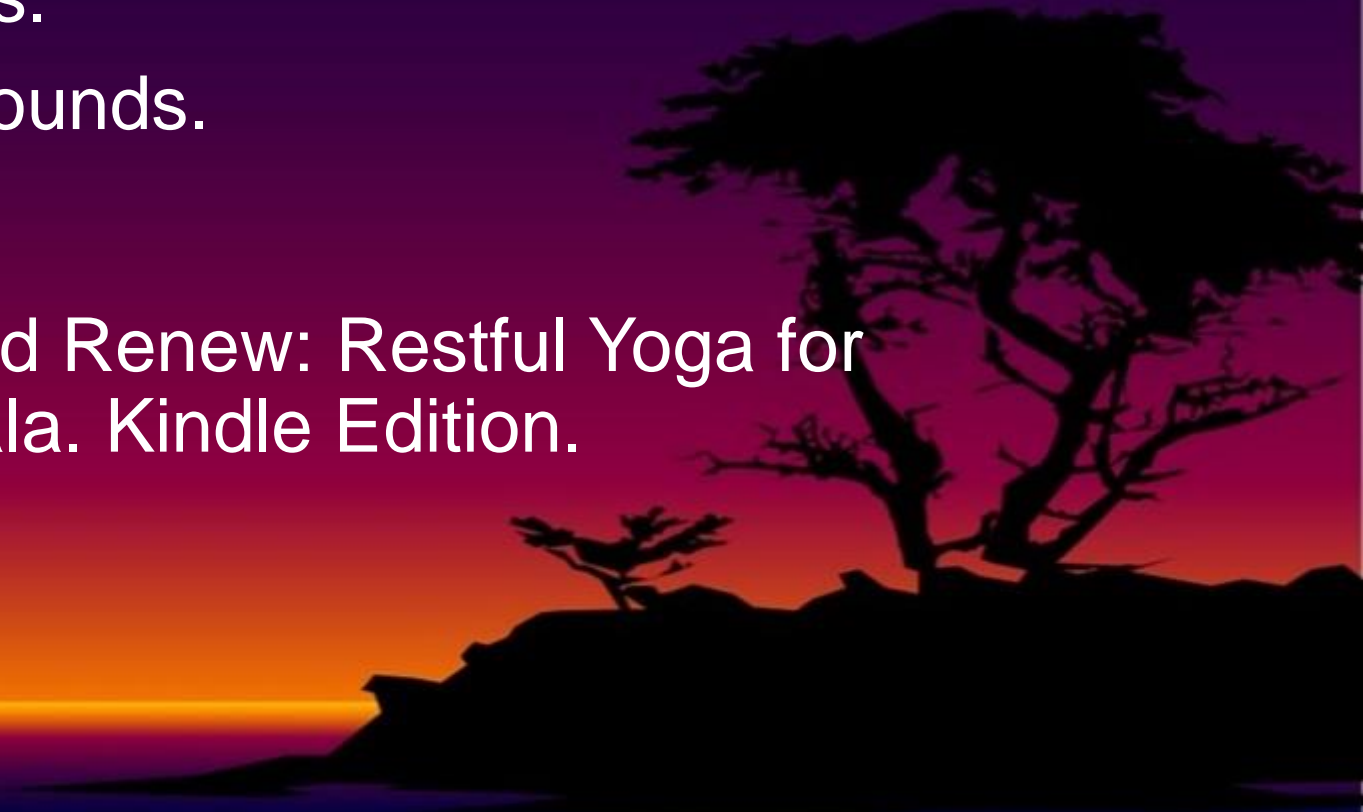
- Studies show that pranayama helps invoke the parasympathetic nervous system, which is imperative in our RY practice
- Any pranayama that is calming would be beneficial.
- Ujjayi, Sinking (Relaxation) Breath, and Nadi Shodhana are good choices
- Practice these now
- The Centering Breath is a term coined by Judith Lasater and we'll explore it on the next slide



Pranayama – Centering Breath

- Take a long, slow, gentle inhalation through your nose.
- Take a long, slow exhale through the nose.
- Take several normal breath cycles.
- Repeat these steps for up to 10 rounds.

Lasater, Judith Hanson. *Relax and Renew: Restful Yoga for Stressful Times* (p. 24). Shambhala. Kindle Edition.



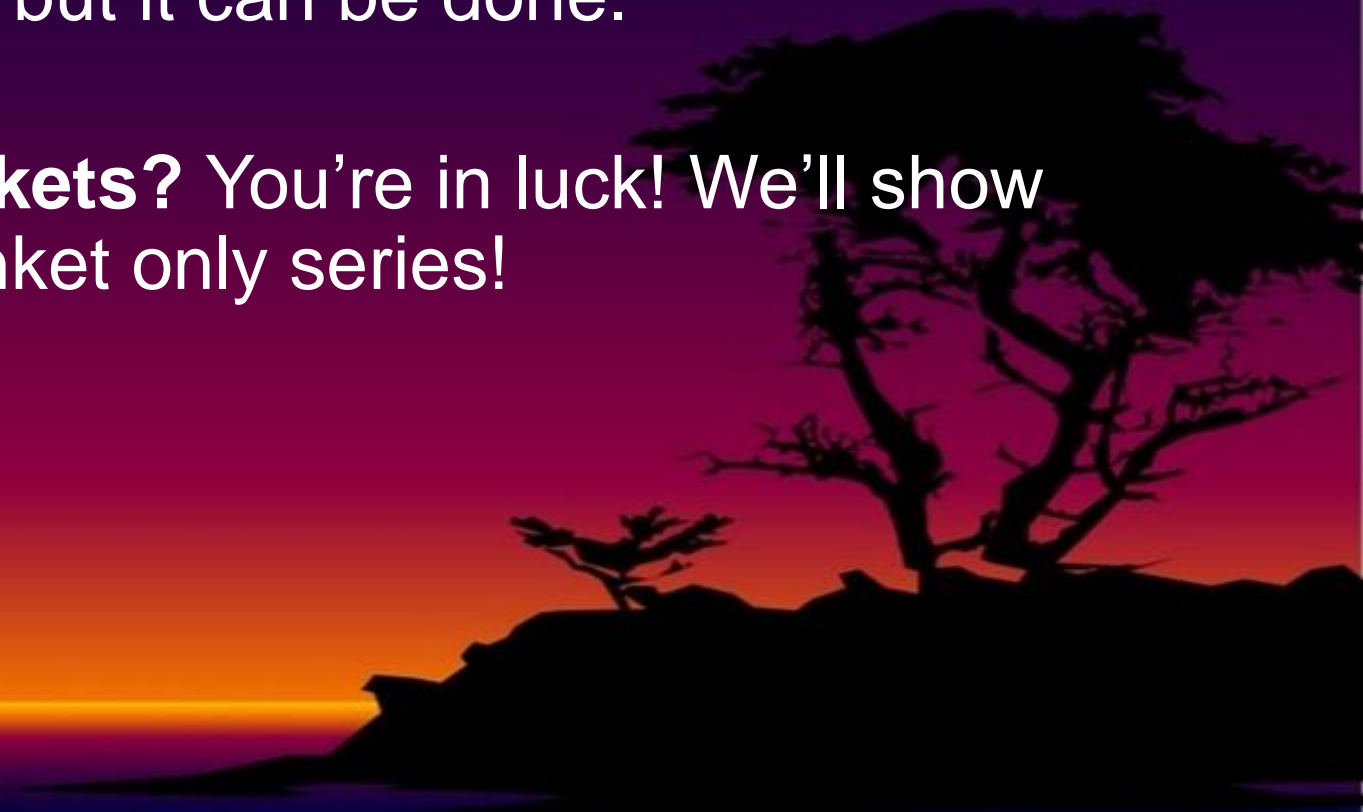
R.Y. Class Themes

- Why are themes useful?
- Themes that inspire relaxation and self-reflection are excellent choices for R.Y:
 - Gratitude
 - Self-care
 - Acceptance
 - Stillness
 - Quieting the mind
 - Awareness
 - Letting go
 - Focusing Inward



Props

- **What if you have only a few props?** We'll show you an option for a 'circuit' style RY class. It takes good planning and mindfulness to pull it off, but it can be done.
- **What if you have only blankets?** You're in luck! We'll show you how to create a one-blanket only series!



RY Sequencing and Guidelines

- Poses are usually held **5-20 minutes**
- **No Empty Space in Long Held Poses!** Use enough props to completely support the body. If there is 'empty space' between the body and the floor, consider placing another prop for full support. Comfort is paramount!
- Note: There may be space in a few, shorter held poses, such as bridge using a strap and block, but even then if the student is uncomfortable, put a bolster between calves and buttocks (or wherever it is needed, depending on the pose).

R/Y Sequencing and Guidelines

- If possible, select poses that **move through all spinal directions**. **That's not always possible**, depending upon class time. If you teach a 1 hour class and select poses that are held 20 minutes each, you can't move in all directions in that class.
- **When transitioning between flexion and extension, some teachers like to take 2-3 minutes in a neutral position** (shavasana is a good choice). This minimizes the chance of a muscle spasm. Although R/Y is gentle, moving from forward/backward without a neutral pause may still feel shocking to some bodies, especially if ill or injured.

RY Sequencing and Guidelines

- If teaching 2 forward folds in a RY session, some teachers opt to sequence those together (back to back) because the yogi may relax more as time goes by, allowing an even deeper relaxation and stretch response. Also, it minimizes the need to go back to neutral as many times. Same applies for 2 backbends together.
- On the other hand, some teachers feel the body craves the opposite direction more immediately.
- White Crow Yoga and Thirumoolar's Ashtanga Therapeutic Yoga teach that both approaches are fine as long as you take the neutral time in between flexion and extension where appropriate.

RY Sequencing and Guidelines

- You'll be asked in this class to create a 75 minute sequence (at least 10 mins of this is meditation). There are many ways to sequence a class. Judith Lasater has a popular sequence called Relax & Renew and it is sequenced as below, but this is not the only way to sequence a class:

Gentle Backbend

Deeper Backbend

Inversion

Legs up the Wall

Twist

Forward Folds

Basic Relaxation Pose



RY Sequencing and Guidelines

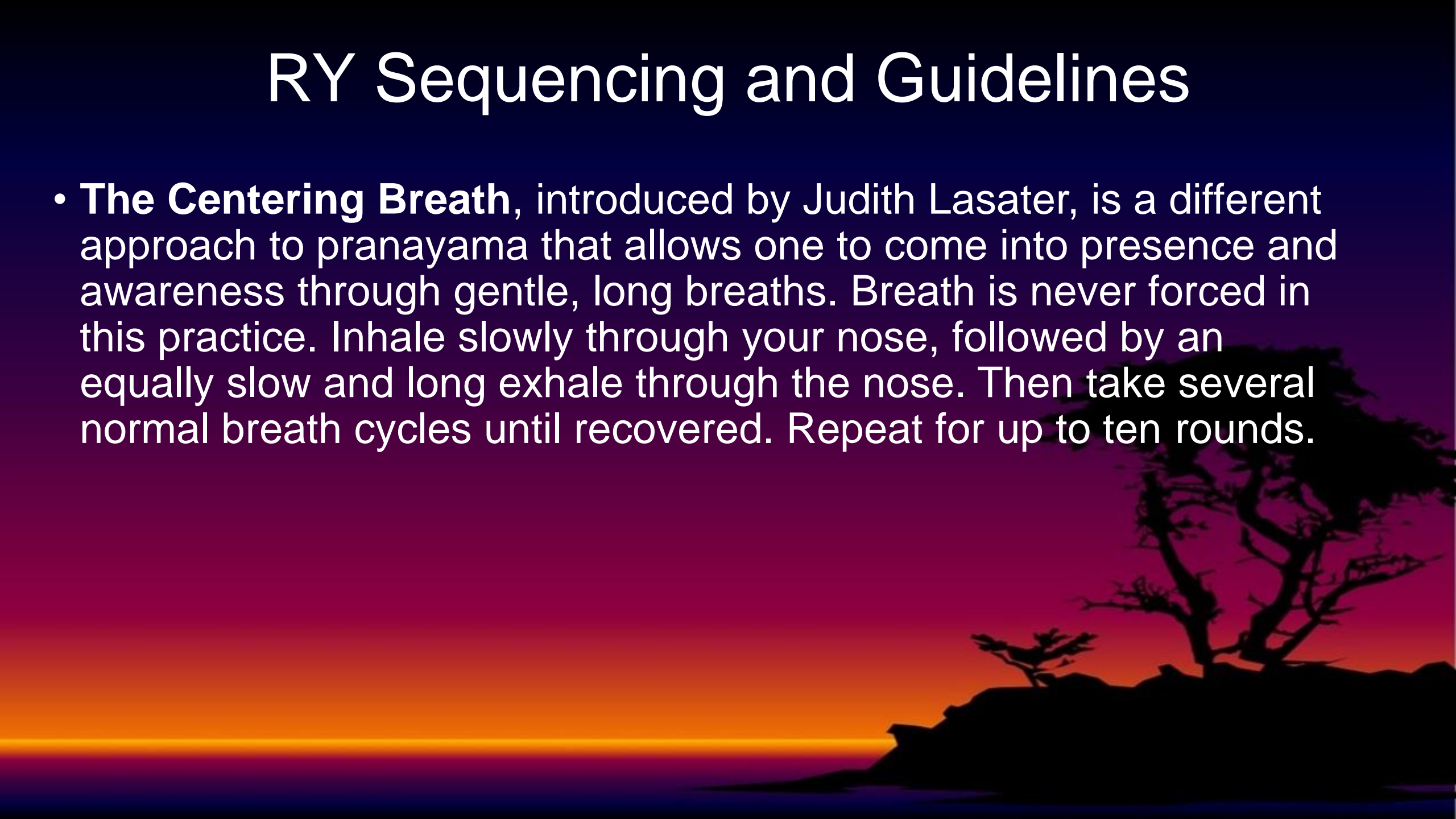
- Judith Lasater mentions alternating forward and backward bends to stimulate and soothe organs “For example, by closing the abdomen with a forward bend and then opening it with a back bend, the abdominal organs are squeezed, forcing the blood out, and then opened, so fresh blood returns to soak the organs.”
- However, as you see in her Relax & Renew sequence, she doesn't alternate every pose between flexion and extension.
- Again, there are many ways to sequence a class. What is your intention? To alternate spinal positions? To go deeper into the next flexion/extension? To minimize prop changes?
- There is no single right way to teach RY!

RY Sequencing and Guidelines

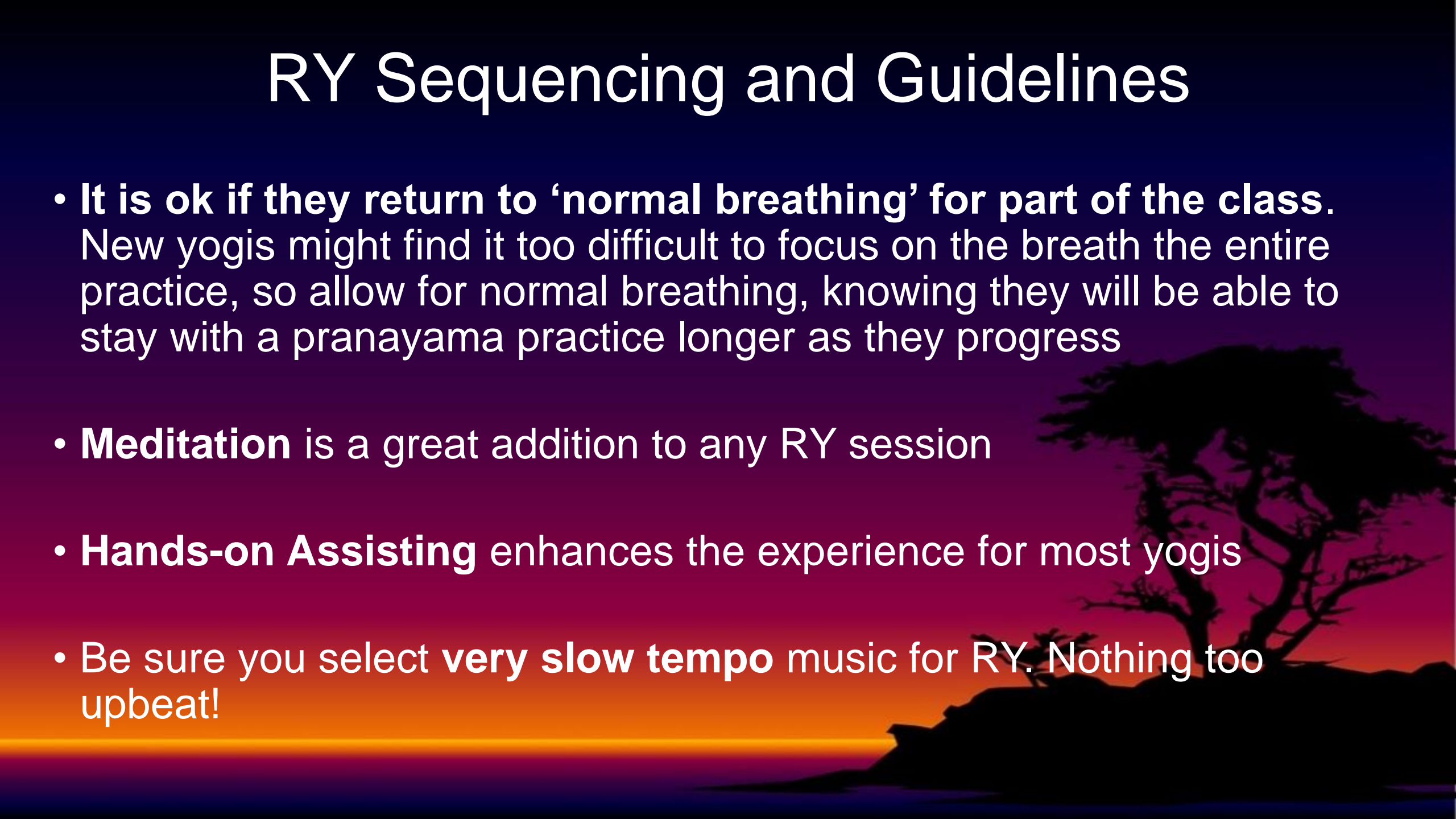
- Include Pranayama in each RY session.
- **Select calming Pranayama** such as a Centering Breath. You may even do a specific calming pranayama, such as Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana).
- Warm-up moves: Some teachers like to do a few gentle warm-up movements before going into restorative poses. It's a valid option.
- While we are exploring RY as a class, you certainly can add a few poses at the end of any yoga class

RY Sequencing and Guidelines

- **The Centering Breath**, introduced by Judith Lasater, is a different approach to pranayama that allows one to come into presence and awareness through gentle, long breaths. Breath is never forced in this practice. Inhale slowly through your nose, followed by an equally slow and long exhale through the nose. Then take several normal breath cycles until recovered. Repeat for up to ten rounds.



R.Y. Sequencing and Guidelines

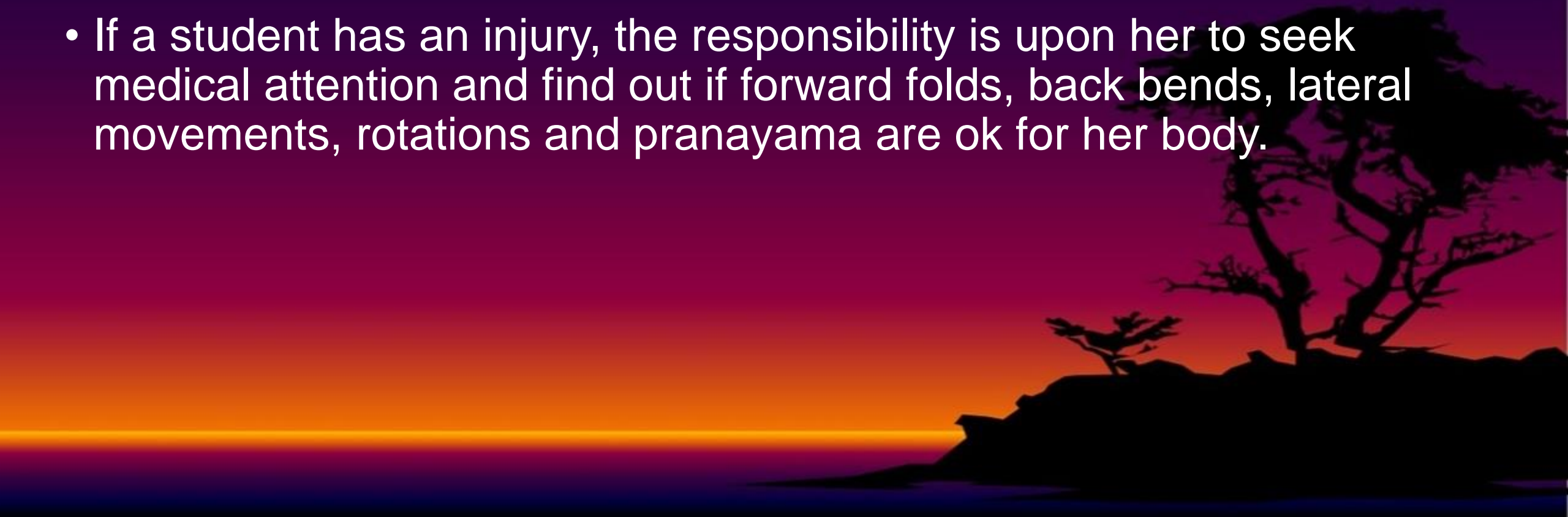
- **It is ok if they return to 'normal breathing' for part of the class.** New yogis might find it too difficult to focus on the breath the entire practice, so allow for normal breathing, knowing they will be able to stay with a pranayama practice longer as they progress
 - **Meditation** is a great addition to any R.Y. session
 - **Hands-on Assisting** enhances the experience for most yogis
 - Be sure you select **very slow tempo** music for R.Y. Nothing too upbeat!
- 
- The background of the slide features a sunset scene with a gradient of colors from orange at the bottom to purple at the top. Silhouettes of trees and a landscape are visible on the right side of the image.

Accessibility to All Bodies

- What are strategies to make RY **accessible to everyone**?
 - Use of Props, Props, **Props!**
 - Modifications, Modifications, **Modifications!**
 - **Alternative Poses**
- **Discussion:** What are some factors that contribute to a posture not being accessible or comfortable for a body?
- **Make the pose fit the body** (don't force the body to fit the pose). That may mean offering an alternative pose in some cases, but we can usually find a comfortable position in all poses if we use enough props and modifications.
- **BUT**, don't get attached to a pose. If a body can't fit the pose even with props and modifications, **offer an alternative pose. Not everyone should do every pose!**

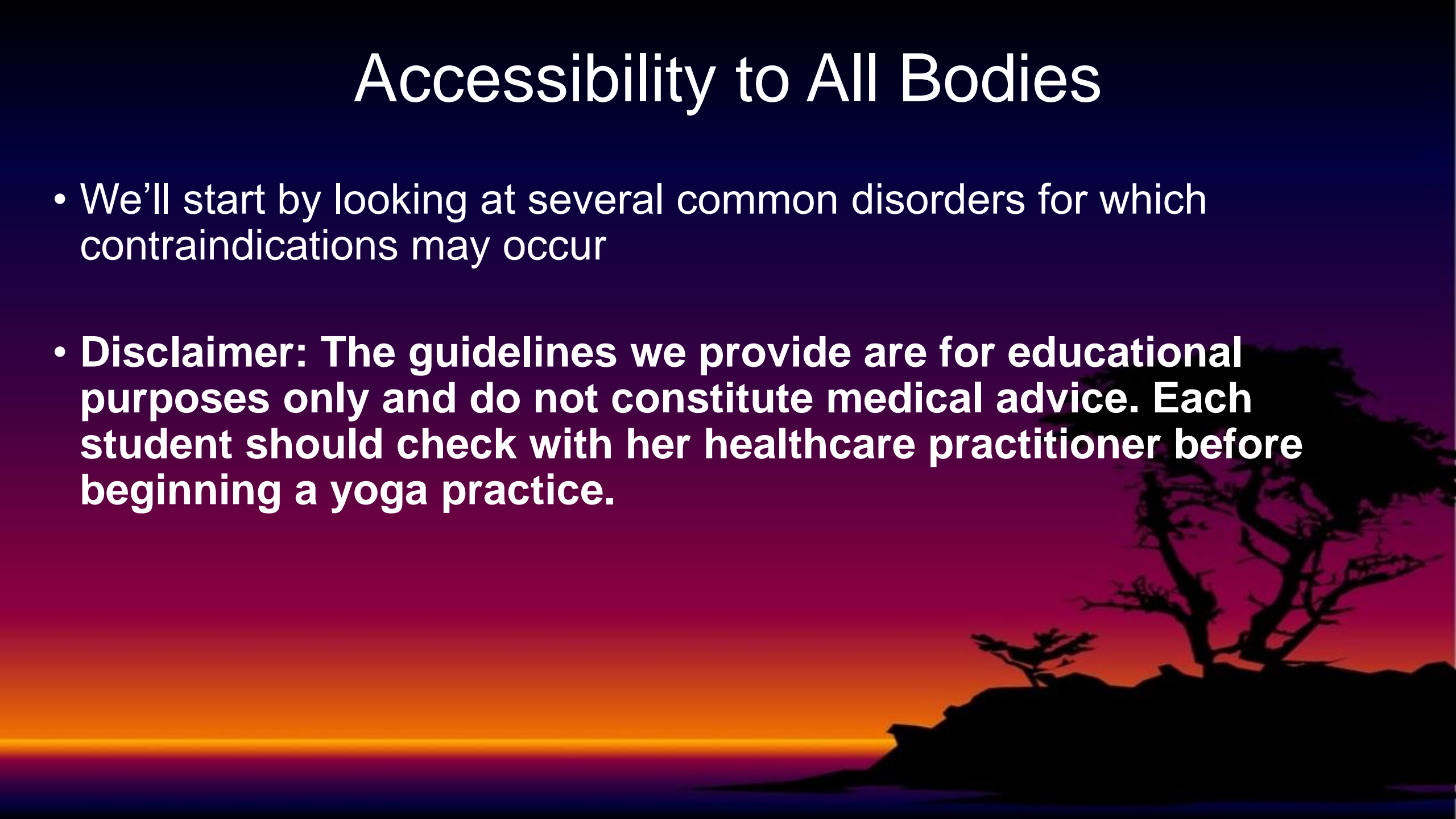
Accessibility to All Bodies

- Even with a gentle RY practice, not all poses are suitable for all bodies. We will go through contraindications for specific poses in this course.
- If a student has an injury, the responsibility is upon her to seek medical attention and find out if forward folds, back bends, lateral movements, rotations and pranayama are ok for her body.



Accessibility to All Bodies

- We'll start by looking at several common disorders for which contraindications may occur
- **Disclaimer: The guidelines we provide are for educational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice. Each student should check with her healthcare practitioner before beginning a yoga practice.**



Possible Contraindications

Spinal stenosis – narrowing of spinal canal

Spondylosis - inflammation and degeneration of the spine itself

Spondylolysis – defect of a vertebra, most often occurs at L5

Spondylolisthesis - joint instability condition where one vertebra slips in front of the other, causing nerve pain

Ankylosing Spondylitis – rheumatic disease

Tumors, especially if pressing on nerves or in the spine

Infections - spondylitis osteomyelitis and sacroiliitis, which are infections of joints, bones and ligaments of the spine

Age-related and non-age related degenerative disc disease

Osteoarthritis - ‘wear and tear’ on the joints and Rheumatoid Arthritis – immune disorder

Cancer

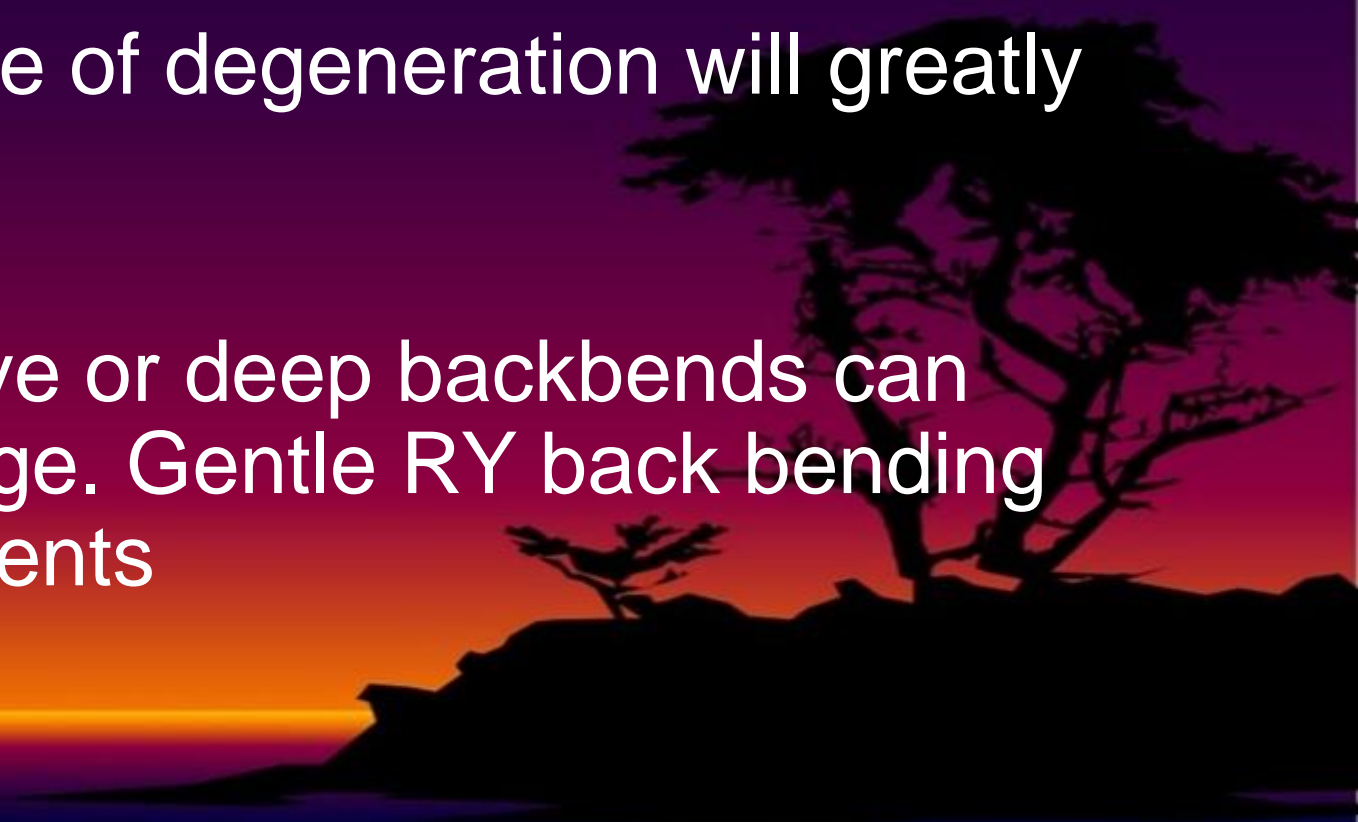
- Central stenosis is narrowing of the central canal where the spinal cord travels.
 - For central stenosis, back extensions can close off the spinal canal and must be approached with caution, backing off if symptoms are reproduced. Forward bends open the canal diameter and will help to reduce symptoms.

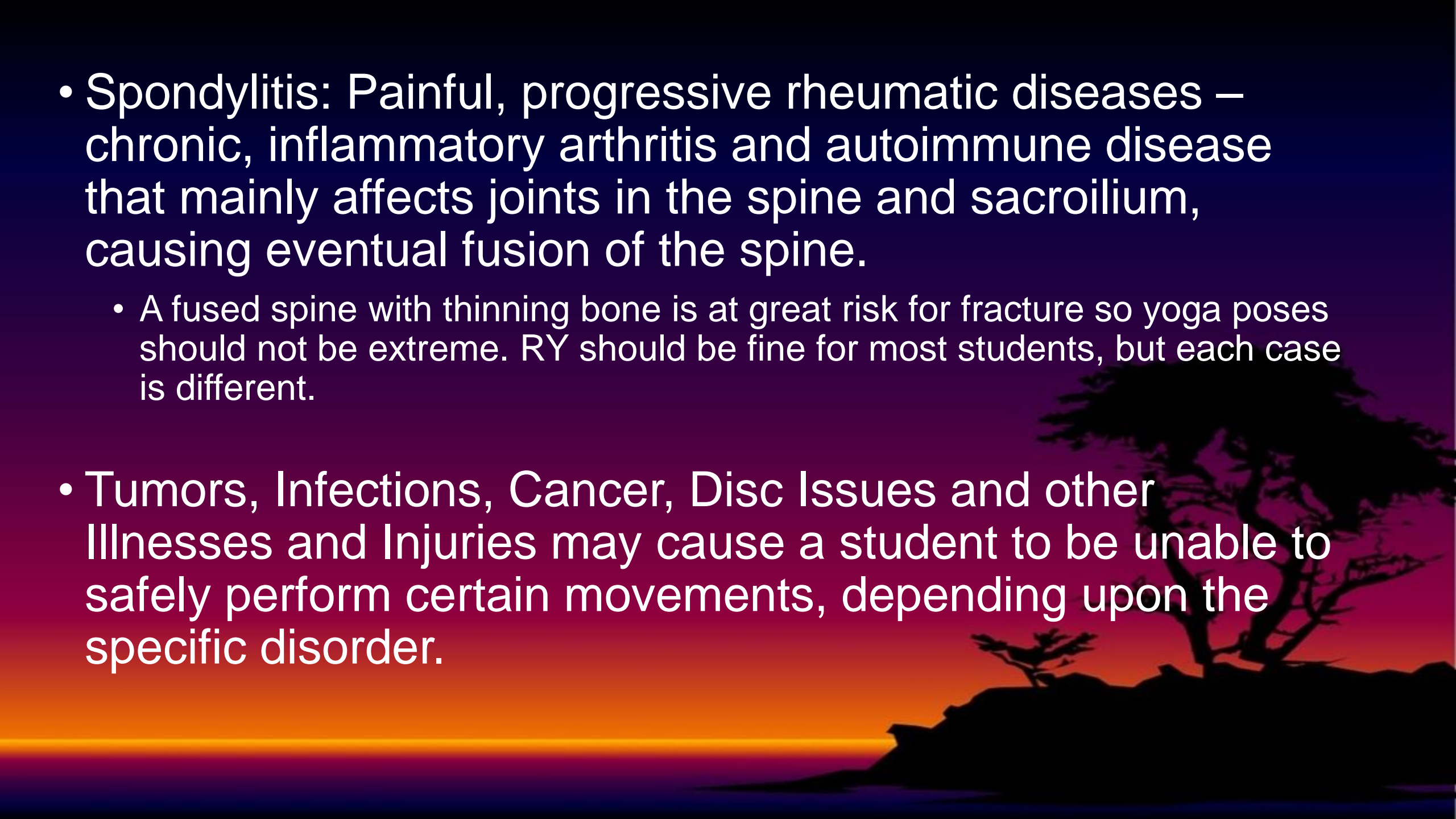


- **Lateral stenosis** is the narrowing of the openings between vertebrae where the nerve roots exit the spine.
 - For **lateral stenosis**, side bending and twisting away from the painful side will open up the spaces between the vertebrae, reducing nerve pressure and pain.
- For both types of stenosis, practice inversions to reduce inflammation and practice poses emphasizing good posture and lengthen the spine.

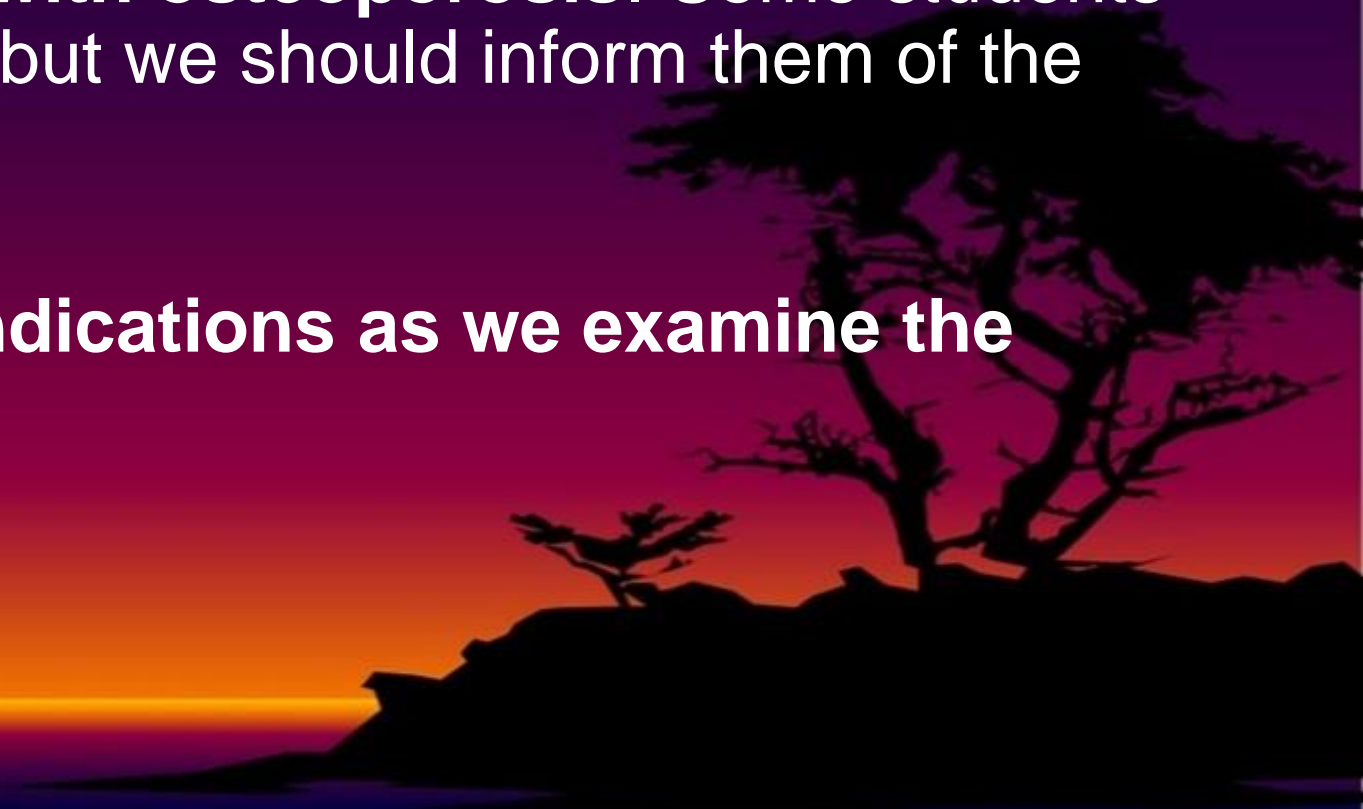


- **Cervical Spondylosis:** Forward bending of the neck is thought to be contraindicated by many (but not all) medical professionals. Work with client to determine if this is helpful or harmful.
- **Lumbar Spondylosis:** Degree of degeneration will greatly determine movement ability
- **Spondylolisthesis:** Excessive or deep backbends can increase potential for slippage. Gentle RY back bending should be fine for most students



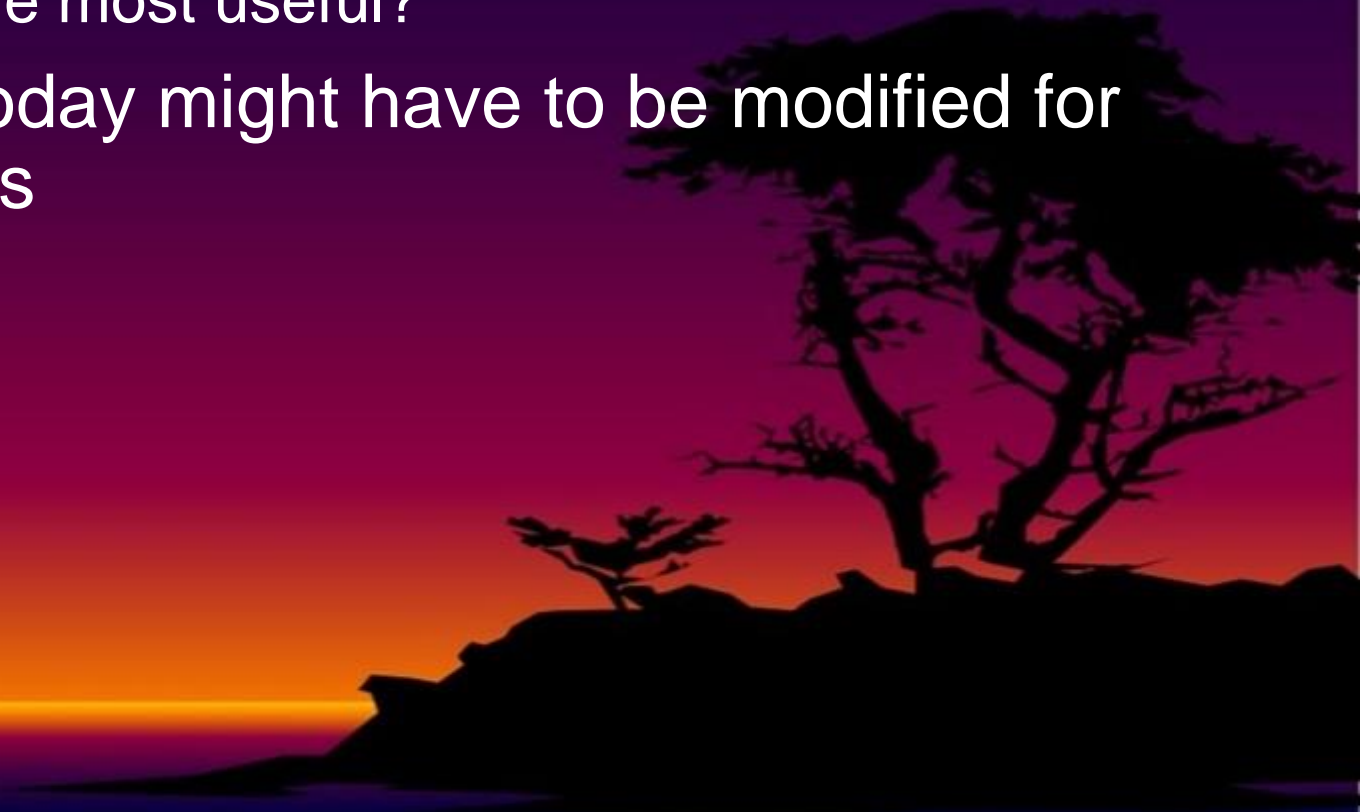
- Spondylitis: Painful, progressive rheumatic diseases – chronic, inflammatory arthritis and autoimmune disease that mainly affects joints in the spine and sacroiliac, causing eventual fusion of the spine.
 - A fused spine with thinning bone is at great risk for fracture so yoga poses should not be extreme. RY should be fine for most students, but each case is different.
 - Tumors, Infections, Cancer, Disc Issues and other Illnesses and Injuries may cause a student to be unable to safely perform certain movements, depending upon the specific disorder.
- 
- A background image showing the silhouettes of trees against a vibrant sunset sky with orange, red, and purple hues.

- Not every RY pose is appropriate for **pregnant students**. Take Prenatal Yoga Training for a complete understanding of which poses are appropriate for prenatal students.
- The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends **no forward folding or twisting for those with osteoporosis**. Some students may still choose to participate, but we should inform them of the guidelines.
- **We will look at more contraindications as we examine the poses**



Accessibility to All Bodies

- What are the modifications, props and alternative poses that help make RY accessible to all?
 - As you go through class, pay attention to your own body. Where do you need more props? Which props are most useful?
- Discuss how the poses taught today might have to be modified for different body types or conditions



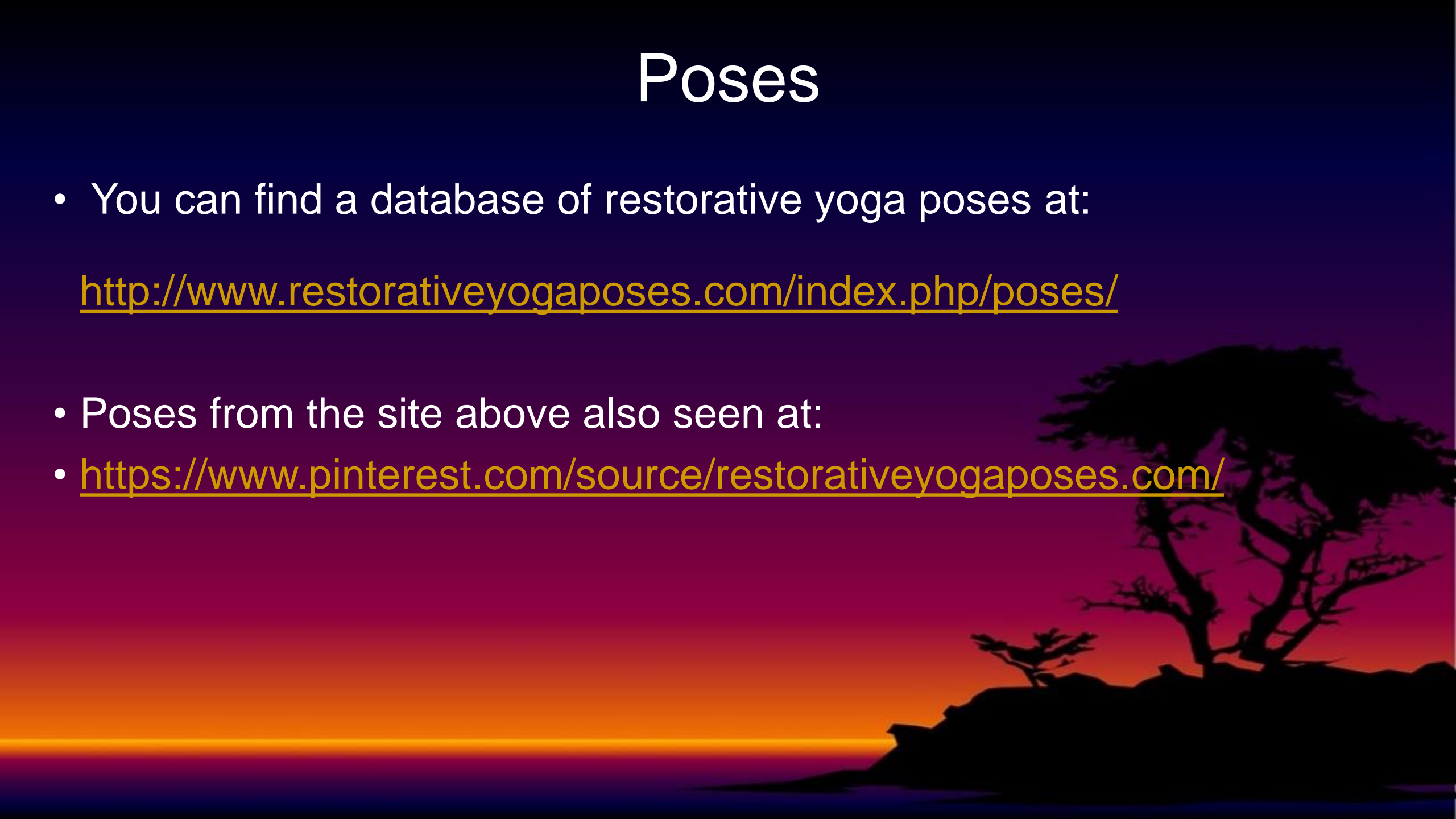
Poses

- You can find a database of restorative yoga poses at:

<http://www.restorativeyogaposes.com/index.php/poses/>

- Poses from the site above also seen at:

- <https://www.pinterest.com/source/restorativeyogaposes.com/>



Props You Lie Over

PROP	QTY.	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS	ALTERNATIVES
Blanket	3-7	firmly pressed or woven wool or cotton	62" x 80"	thick bath towels; quilts; rolled or folded nonskid mat; sofa cushions
Block	1	wood or recycled foam	4" x 6" x 9"	stack of hardcover books, tied together; telephone book
Bolster	1	cotton-filled cushion with round edges	9" x 9" x 27"	blankets; thick bath towels; couch cushions
Mat	1	nonskid	1/8" x 24" x 68"	nonslip floor
Pillow	1	from bed or sofa		folded towel or blanket
Towel	2	standard-size bath, thin cotton	2' x 3'	folded cloth

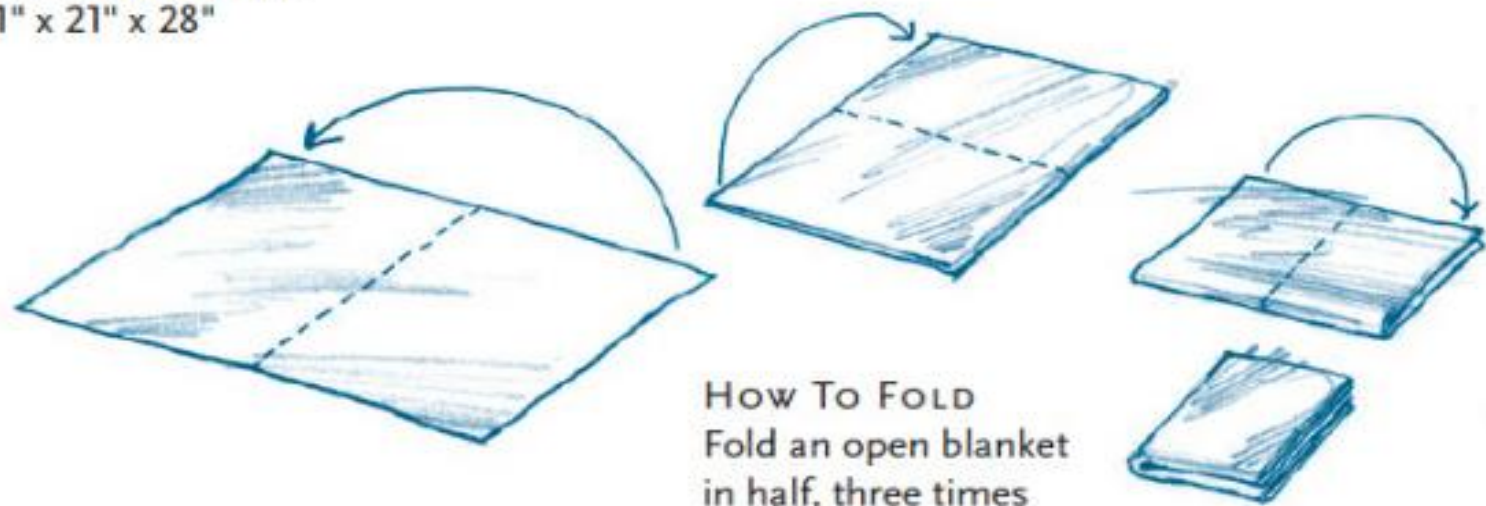
Props You Place on Your Body

PROP	QTY.	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS	ALTERNATIVES
Belt	1	cotton, with D-ring buckle	1.5" x 72"	wide bathrobe tie; 2 wide neckties tied together
Elastic Bandage	1	athletic-type wrap commonly found at pharmacy	4" x 48"	eyebag
Eyebag	1	8-oz. silk- or cotton-covered bag, filled with washable plastic beads, or uncooked rice, or flax seeds	1" x 4" x 8.5"	facecloth folded to measure 3" x 12"
Sandbag	1	10-lb. sand-filled bag covered with durable fabric	2" x 7" x 17"	package of rice, beans, or sugar

Props You Rest On or Against

PROP	QTY.	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS	ALTERNATIVES
Chair	1	folding type preferred	standard	sturdy, wooden or metal chair, without rollers or casters
Door & Doorknob	1	3-hinge door with securely attached knob	standard	sturdy column or post
Table	1	sturdy	waist height x shoulder width	cover with nonskid mat and use folded blankets to achieve correct height
Wall	1	flat, bare (free of windows, decorations)	shoulder height x shoulder width	any clear, flat, solid, sturdy vertical surface

STANDARD-FOLD
1" x 21" x 28"



How To FOLD
Fold an open blanket
in half, three times

SINGLE-FOLD
2.5" x 10" x 28"



How To FOLD
Standard-fold;
fold in half lengthwise



DOUBLE-FOLD

5" x 7.5" x 28"



How To FOLD
Standard-fold;
two folds lengthwise

LONG-ROLL

5" x 6" x 28"



How To FOLD
Standard-fold; start at long
folded edge and roll blanket

