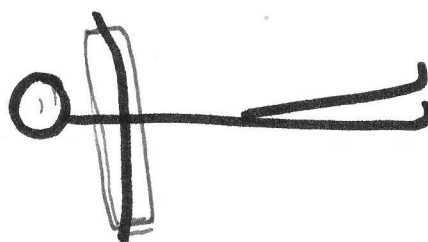


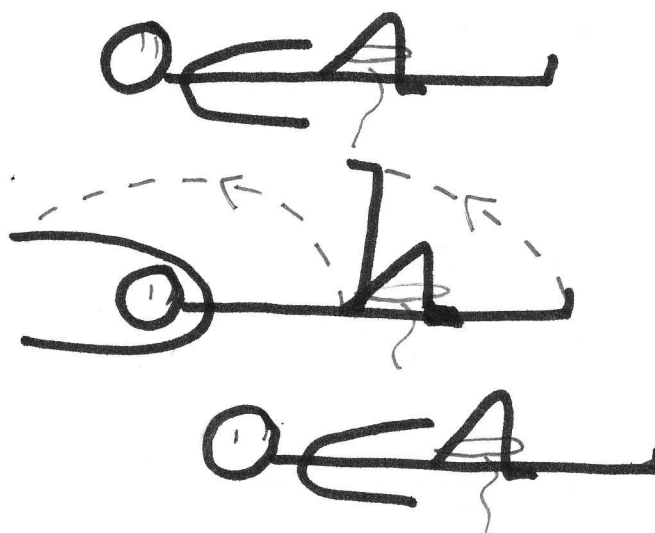
Supporting the Spine in Asana

We look to the spine to support us, but our spine will last longer if we take care to support it - in and out of asana.

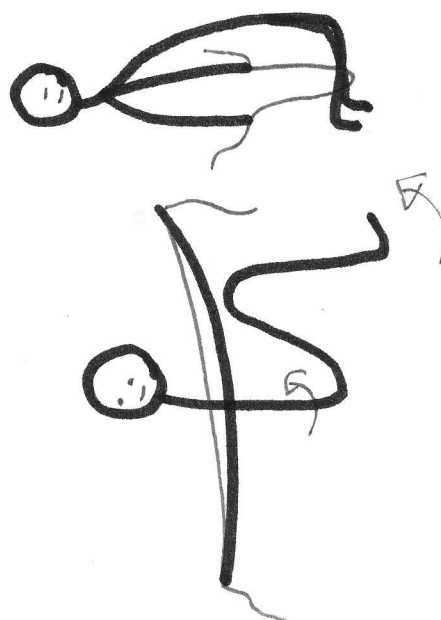
Lie supine with the arms out at shoulder-level, a folded blanket under the shoulders and arms. Allow the breath to lightly deepen, inhabiting the space between the thoracic vertebrae and within the shoulders.



Lie supine and take a belt around the thigh and lower shin of the folded R leg. Exhaling, press the R foot into the floor and stretch into the sole of the L foot; inhaling, maintain the pressure of the R foot on the floor and raise the L leg to vertical, simultaneously taking the arms overhead; exhaling, slowly return the L leg and the arms. By the end of the exhalation the palms of the hands are also pressing into the mat. Repeat X 5.



Dvi Pada Pitham: Work up slowly and, after 3 lifts, take the belt around the mid-shin before lifting again. Press the feet firmly into the mat with the exhalation to support the lower back and draw on the belt to give extra lift in the thoracic spine.



Jathara Paravrittāsana: Taking the belt at its full length behind the shoulders, draw firmly on each end as you bend the legs and roll the knees left towards the floor - but not all the way! Exhaling, roll the abdominal muscles from L to R to support the spine. Allow the head to be passive, eyes quiet. Change after 5 breaths and repeat on the other side.

Wendy Teasdill