

Concussion

Description:

A Concussion is a bump, jolt or blow to the head causing the brain to bounce around and/or twist in the skull (CDC, 2017). Even though it's considered a "mild" traumatic brain injury, it is absolutely **imperative** a person heed the advice of their medical professional to give the brain time to recover. After a concussion, a person should take three days of rest with frequent naps and restrict any screen time. Not giving the brain enough time to heal can result in Post-Concussion Syndrome which can last months, years and even become permanent. The jostling of the brain can damage cells, and cause changes in brain chemistry making it more sensitive until it fully recovers.

My Experience:

In April, 2015 I incurred a concussion by hitting my forehead on a doorway a couple inches too low for my height. The concussion was short-lived with headaches, and stomach upset lasting about a month before returning to normal. However, the following year almost to the day, April, 2016 I incurred a second concussion dancing (another couple ran into to my head) which lasted almost two years. After numerous visits to my Primary Care Physician, Neurologist, two catscans, numerous Craniosacral Treatments and Physical Therapy treatments, I was finally able to return to regular activities of yoga, dancing and biking. My productivity level has almost returned to normal, as well as my need for an increased amount of sleep.

Some people, including some physicians, think no recovery time is necessary after a concussion, but I am convinced had I not continued with my regular activities after the second concussion I would not have suffered with Post Concussion Syndrome for the following two years. It is very difficult to take off work and refrain from screen time for three days, but to avoid the possible long term or permanent damage to your brain is worth taking three days of rest. After the second concussion, I was unable to work much for six months. I could not walk outside for three months due to overstimulation making me dizzy. Depression is common, understandably when you are used to an active life, and all of a sudden cannot even walk outside. Employers and co-workers may not understand the EXTREME FATIGUE a person experiences after a concussion, and the NEED for daily naps. If you have a concussion, realize THIS IS YOUR BRAIN HEALING, and it is NOT something to "tough out". I learned this the hard way.

October, 2018 I incurred a third concussion within the past four years (wind caught truck door which slammed into the back of my head. This time I observed the three days of brain rest, and worked half days thereafter for about ten days. Thankfully this time within a month I had recovered. Three months later I am able to get back to my inversions! ☺

Symptoms:

- Headache
- Feeling of pressure in head
- Tinnitus or ringing in the ears
- Dizziness
- Increased sensitivity to light and noise
- Nausea
- Extreme Fatigue
- Confusion, forgetfulness, problems with memory and concentration
- Increased Anxiety

Benefits of Yoga	Precautions
Meditation was extremely beneficial during my concussion recovery to help alleviate symptoms and increased anxiety.	Avoid any inversions which invert the head such as downdog, headstand, handstand, full forward fold. Many poses can be modified. Ie: Downdog can be done against the wall without inverting the head. In a flow do Tabletop instead of Downdog.
Gentle yoga or Chair Yoga can be very effective to help with balance and maintain muscle strength during recovery.	First three days after a concussion, take off work, take frequent naps, meditate and avoid all forms of screen time including computers, tablets and smart phones. This may sound extreme, but after two years of Post-Concussion Syndrome, three days rest is worth it to avoid possibly causing further harm to your brain. Remember, this is your BRAIN healing!
Being mindful, listening to your body and taking care of yourself during recovery is essential. Most importantly a person NEEDS to make sure they get plenty of sleep and frequent naps.	After three days of rest, avoid over stimulation such as bright or flashing lights, loud music, parties, crowds. Plenty of sleep is essential, 8-9 hours/night plus afternoon naps. Listen to your body.
A person can incorporate their Physical Therapy into their yoga practice, mainly working on balance.	Use extra caution when driving. Reaction time may be impaired. Avoid heavy traffic which could result in over stimulation.
Visit an eye doctor who specializes in concussion recovery. In the past year they have had success with prizm	Those around you should realize you might be more emotional, and not yourself. Depression is common when a

glasses to cut down on dizziness and retrain the eyes for balance.	person is not able to be as active during healing.

Mini Flow:

Mat flow working on balance for milder concussions

- Seated pranayama, meditating on ""So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." ~ Isaiah 41:10.
- Breath prayer:
 - Inhale: "Thank you Lord"
 - Exhale: "for healing."
- Slow seated spinal circles (slow motion helps retrain the brain to accept movement again without getting dizzy)
- Slow neck stretches (typically the neck really stiffens during concussion recovery, trying to protect the head)
- Gently massage masseter, temples and back of neck.
- Cat/cows keeping head neutral
- Table top, lift right leg, step right foot to hands (NO downdog or fwd fold transition).
- Crescent lunge.
- Cartwheel right arm down and left up into side twist
- Slowly, carefully cartwheel arms back into exalted warrior.
- Transition cartwheeling arms between side twists and exalted warrior several times working on balance. Repeat on left side.
- Using wall for assist, practice standing on one leg, then the other. For more challenge, pretend to draw a figure 8 on the floor with your big toe. Reverse direction.
- Wall flow – wall Downdog, inhale wall Plank, exhale wall Tricep Pushup, inhale wall Plank, exhale wall Downdog, Repeat several times.
- Come back to mat for tricep pushups (can do modified from knees), inhale up, exhale down.
- Seated, hold thumb up arm's length in front of face, fix eyes on thumb and move head right and left (helps re-program brain to movement). Repeat w/ other thumb.
- Boat pose.
- This time keep head stable, and move thumb right and left following with eyes. Repeat with other thumb.
- Camel or modified camel (avoid bridge or any pose w/ head lower than body).
- Supine Twists
- Elevate head on pillow, bolster or blanket for shavasana.

Chair Yoga – for more severe concussions:

(**Check with doctor before beginning any type of yoga or exercise program.**)

Listen to your body. Sometimes even deep breathing can be over stimulating to the brain with a concussion.

- Seated gentle pranayama (breath work), meditating on “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” ~ Isaiah 41:10.
- Breath prayer:
 - Inhale: “Thank you Lord”
 - Exhale: “for healing.”
- Slow seated spinal circles (slow motion helps retrain the brain to accept movement again without getting dizzy)
- Slow neck stretches (typically the neck really stiffens during concussion recovery, trying to protect the head)
- Gently massage masseter, temples and back of neck.
- Sitting towards edge of chair - Cat/cows keeping head neutral
- Seated twists
- Flow: Seated Warrior 2 – seated Exalted Warrior – seated Warrior 2 -
.....Repeat on other side.
- Using wall for assist, practice standing on one leg, then the other. For more challenge, pretend to draw a figure 8 on the floor with your big toe. Reverse direction.
- Wall flow – wall Downdog, inhale wall Plank, exhale wall Tricep Pushup, inhale wall Plank, exhale wall Downdog, Repeat several times.
- Standing behind Chair, step back into Crescent Lunge, test balance holding w/ one hand or both arms up.
- Seated, hold thumb up arm’s length in front of face, fix eyes on thumb and move head right and left (helps re-program brain to movement). Repeat w/ other thumb.
- This time keep head stable, and move thumb right and left following with eyes. Repeat with other thumb.
- Seated modified Chair Boat pose – one leg or both legs up
- Chair Twists
- Comfortable seated Shavasana.

References:

2015-2018 – Personal experience having three concussion within four years.

2016, Physical Therapy of the Rockies, Personal Physical Therapy sessions.

Huber, Char (2016) Personal CranioSacral Therapy sessions.

2016, St. Lukes Hospital Emergency Room

Shriver, Annette, PA (2016-2017) Family Care Southwest