



Over the Moon

Like Anusara itself, this variation of Half Moon Pose is sweet, bendy—and lots of fun.

WALK INTO ANY WORKSHOP led by John Friend, founder of Anusara Yoga, and you're immediately struck by how happy everyone is. Students from the close-knit community exchange hellos, warm smiles, and hugs. The room radiates joy.

That's no surprise, given the message at the core of Friend's teaching. "Joy is part of our true nature," he says, "and the highest reason for doing hatha yoga is to express that nature. Asana practice is a wonderful way to open our hearts to grace—and to our innate goodness, power, and beauty."

The inspiration for Anusara's joyful philosophy comes from the Siddha Yoga lineage of Gurumayai Chidvilasana. This Tantric tradition sees the universe as a manifestation of the luminous divine consciousness; all objects and beings are the forms divinity uses in a playful dance of

mirroring and rediscovering itself. For the details of asana practice, Friend draws from his many years of teaching and practicing Iyengar Yoga, which emphasizes precise alignment. In Friend's view, all the physical instructions that help you do a pose can be boiled down to a few basic biomechanical rules that he calls the Universal Principles of Alignment. These principles help you align your body with the laws of nature and the free flow of divine energy.

Friend believes you can embody the Universal Principles in any asana by following five steps. First, you *open to grace*: You form an intention to align yourself with the divine consciousness and soften your boundaries so your heart and inner body can fill with energy. Next you *engage muscular*

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