

## Concentrate and Connect

Use this mind-body cool-down in your class.

You don't have to teach a full mind-body class to pass along the benefits to your participants. The cool-down portion of class—in which you bring down heart rates and core body temperatures—is a perfect time to introduce elements of tai chi and yoga. Participants sometimes have a difficult time making the transition from the work phase of class to this final section, and it can be a challenge to help them rein in their thoughts and concentrate. This cool-down from Lawrence Biscontini, MA, group fitness manager at the Golden Door Spa in Las Cabañas, Puerto Rico, moves from active recovery to flexibility exercises, ending on a positive wellness note that participants will appreciate.

**Note:** This is just one small portion of a full class and is meant for educational reference. Keep in mind that during a cool-down, your goal is to decrease heart rates gradually to 120 beats per minute or below before moving on to flexibility and relaxation elements.

### Sinking the Chi (4x)

*Focus on breath awareness to bring down heart rate.*

Stand in horse stance (feet shoulder width apart and parallel, knees slightly bent), palms facing body. Raise arms to sides and overhead. Fingers almost touch at top of movement, and palms pronate to cover body with chi; gaze remains forward. Next, lower arms in front of body, palms down, passing face, neck, chest and navel. As arms lower, flex knees more, until you feel as though

you're riding a horse. Extend knees (but maintain slight flexion) as you raise arms again and repeat the process.

### Supporting Heaven (4x)

*Coordinate movement with breath; stretch latissimus dorsi and biceps.*

In horse stance, supinate palms in front of *dan tien* (front and center part of transverse abdominis) and raise them to heart. Pronate and turn palms forward and up, raising them overhead; gaze moves upward with hands. Then sweep arms out and down to sides, guiding chi toward body.

### Low Warrior

*Stretch and open hip flexors.*

Lunge forward, stepping right foot between hands, knee directly over ankle. Gently lower left knee and foot down to floor. Inhale and lift arms overhead. Repeat on other side.

### Seated Palm

*Focus on posture and breath.*

Sit in a cross-legged position, aligning ears between shoulders. Balance on sitting bones, palms up. Inhale, lengthen spine and retract scapulae.

### Lifted Chest/Proud Palm

*Open chest and focus on extension.*

From "seated palm" position, place hands slightly behind hips, palms down. Bend spine backwards and lift chest, minimizing bend in elbows.

### Leaning Palm

*Lengthen obliques and stretch quadratus lumborum.*

From "seated palm" position, slide

right hand along floor to right while simultaneously reaching left arm up and overhead. Allow spine to bend to right, facilitated by movement of arms. Repeat on other side.

### Downward-Facing Dog

*Open hamstrings and enhance lower-body mobility.*

From all fours, spread hands and turn toes under. Exhaling, lift knees away from floor. Lengthen sitting bones toward ceiling, push thighs back and stretch heels toward floor. Release tension in neck and jaw; keep shoulder blades back and down. Align head between biceps.

### Pigeon Pose

*Stretch hip flexors and gluteals.*

From all fours, slide right knee forward to back of right wrist. Angle right shin under torso and bring right foot to front of left knee. Slowly slide left leg back, straighten left knee and let front of left thigh descend to floor. Position right heel just in front of left hip. Repeat on other side.

### Final Relaxation

Sit back in "proud palm" position and practice a "full body scan," a Feldenkrais exercise. Cue participants to concentrate and connect with their feelings and breath for 60 seconds, comparing these sensations to those experienced before the workout. Ask participants to notice what is tight and what has opened. Congratulate everyone for taking another step toward wellness. ♦