

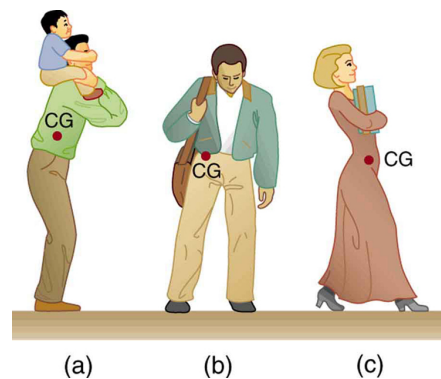
Spanda® Yoga for Resilient Aging™: Balance

There are myriad components to balance. Personal health issues can severely affect balance, many of which can be addressed to a great degree with traditional medical treatment and complementary therapy such as yoga therapy. However overall, older adults see a decrease in ability to balance due to a number of factors including: reduction of strength, particularly lower body and core strength, reduction of flexibility especially in the ankles, feet, and hips, vision impairment, and age-related decreases in neural processing.

Spanda® yoga therapeutics for balance focus on: balance poses including the mechanics of weight shift, strengthening movements, stimulation of the righting reactions and equilibrium responses 'hard-wired' into the nervous system, proprioceptive awareness, improvement of the use of the feet and ankles, and alignment of the legs and whole body. Some practices:

Center of gravity awareness: Your center of gravity is in the center of your pelvis in normal standing. In martial arts it's called the *hara* or *dan tien*.

Center of Gravity (or Mass) Def'n.: The balance point where body weight is concentrated and equally distributed. It's the point of center at which the body may rotate freely in all directions.



Lower body and Core Strength

Mula bandha and uddiyana bandha (agni sara)
Adductor squeeze
Front and side leg lifts
Donkey kicks
Bird-in-flight pose (w or w/o agni sara)

Whole Body Alignment

Alignment Landmarks in Mountain Pose: center of the ankle, side of the knee, center of the hip, center of the shoulder, ear.

Joint Mobility in Lower Body: any and all yoga stretches for the lower body!

Body Use in Weight Shift and Locomotion

Foot strike roller skates
Use of contralateral pattern

Some resources on balance training:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/balance-exercises/sls-20076853>
<http://www.humankinetics.com/excerpts/excerpts/designing-balance-training-programs-2>

Yoga Therapeutic for Vibrant Aging: Balance in Aging

Why does our ability to balance decline as we age? There are several reasons. Blood pressure issues, medications, and the eye issues that beset seniors can all be contributing factors. However loss of muscle mass along with vestibular and reflexive decline are things we can improve and potentially reverse through yoga practice!

The vestibular system tells us where our body is in space: whether we are lying down, sitting erect, leaning to one side, etc. It relates to our nervous system's reflexes, righting reactions, and equilibrium responses. These automatic mechanisms help the body recover when off-balance and to orient correctly in space in relation to gravity.

Body and alignment awareness contribute to better balance because the being able to sense the body in space fine-tunes its placement there.

Also muscular decline can be stopped and reversed through exercise and strengthening yoga practices. Most approaches to muscle strength training are directed at the feet, legs, hips, pelvis and core muscles.

Spanda® Yoga approaches balance training in terms of three areas:

1. Skeletal Alignment
2. Muscular Strength
3. Vestibular Stimulation leading to Improved Functioning

