

Pratikriyasana: The use of counterposes



*Pratikriyasana can be translated as ‘**reverse action pose**’ as prati means ‘reverse or against’, kriya means ‘action’ and asana means ‘pose’.*

Counterposes known as pratikriyasana are to be included in our practices to return our body (and energy) back to balance. This is necessary having practiced an intense asana where potentially we have exerted pressure upon a particular location(s) within the body. So another asana is used to return the body to balance. For example after practicing ustrasana (camel), a strong back bend, we may choose to teach a soft forward bend as a counterpose. We can of course however teach a short series of asana as a counterpose so for ustrasana we might perform adho mukha svanasana (up facing dog) to stretch open the legs and work the shoulders, hips etc. before moving into balasana (child’s pose) to ease the spine, shoulders and so forth.

Counterposes are usually:

- Less complex
- Less strenuous
- Working the body in an opposite way

We may wish students to feel the effects of a strong pose before moving into a counterpose so there may be a short period of stillness for inner reflection before moving on to the counterpose or we may decide to move directly into the counterpose. We must also gauge the necessary time to be spent in a counterpose as the length of time spent in a counterpose will make a great difference to the effect it will have upon the body and mind. We can best know this through our own familiarity with an asana!

For more experienced students the counterposes may be ‘stronger’ asanas but even then at some point we will want to release effort and ‘cool down’ before any quieter work in the later stages of the class.

Note if the counterpose is placed earlier in the class maybe a counterpose can also act as a preparatory pose or carrier of a teaching point for later asana.

Remember we want to leave the body and mind feeling balanced, relaxed and full of energy, ready for anything and the use of counterpose helps us to achieve this.