

HIP OPENING TRAINING PLAN



from **BRETT LARKIN**

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Are tight hips holding you back in your yoga practice?

Are you frustrated poses aren't unlocking for you or feeling good?

Maybe you sit a lot each day - driving or at a desk?

I was once YOU.

It was so frustrating.

I knew I couldn't advance my yoga practice without radically opening my hips, but I couldn't stay in pigeon for more than 30 seconds without wanting to cry, curse or kick something

The way I ended up working with my hips to get them where they are today is completely different from what I was taught in a traditional vinyasa yoga class.

My process involved lots on Yin yoga, self-myofascial release, work at the wall, patience, and emotional healing.

We're told deep-seated emotional issues reside in this area of the body. This is true, but usually left vague.

Even the anatomy of what's happening hip-wise is never properly explained (Hint: more on than 22 muscles play a part in what we casually refer to as "our hips").

In this short eBook and 4-Week Training Plan, I'm going to divulge all my hip opening secrets, from emotional to anatomical.

Let's get started...



INSIDER TIPS

1. EMBRACE COMPLEXITY

In daily life, we talk about “our hips.” In diving deeper into this area of the body, it’s important to realize that what we’re talking about is actually **SEVERAL** large muscle groups surrounding the pelvis and head of the femur:

1. **The Quadriceps and Hip Flexor Muscle groups** (4 muscles in each) - at the front of the leg and hip
2. **The Hamstring Muscle group** (3 major and 1 minor muscle) - the back of the leg
3. **The Groin, Internal rotators and Adductors group** (7 muscles) - inside of the leg
4. **The Gluteal group** (3 gluteals, 3 external rotators and the IT Band which is a large tendon) - on the outer side and back of hip/ buttocks

Number 4, the Gluteal group, is the muscle group most obviously associated with what we call “our hips.” But keep in mind that *everything* is interconnected.

“Tight hips,” means muscles in ALL of the four groups above need to stretch and strengthen. Exactly which muscles and why will differ person-to-person.

“Turn off your analytical brain and tune into what you’re feeling.”



You’ll receive more benefit if you think of softening this area as whole, as opposed to getting caught up in the component parts.

Because the hip is a ball-and-socket joint, how your pelvis and head of your femur is shaped also plays a role.

Nothing in the body exists in isolation. But especially in the hips, things are intricately interconnected and complex.

Often I meet students obsessed with knowing exactly which muscle in the hip is tight and why. They ask me, “Is it Piriformis? Is it Satorius?”

My answer is: “Who cares?”

Especially with the hips, I encourage you to turn off your analytical brain and tune in to what you’re feeling.

Of course, studying anatomy can be fun. If you want to dig deeper how complex (and just how many) muscles exist around the area we call “our hips,” explore this [interactive model](#) for more info.

2. BACK OFF

Every heard a yoga teacher say,

“You store emotions in your hips?”

This can be traced back to evolution.

The muscles surrounded the hip are programmed to kick into high gear anytime your “fight, flight or freeze,” response is triggered. As a caveman you might kick an assailant, dash away, or drop into a fetal position and play dead.

All of these movements involve your pelvis, lower body, and legs in a big way.

In modern life, we're not running away from lions. But loud sounds (like a fire alarm), the never-ending constant buzzing of your phone, fear, stress and worry, all elicit the same response.

When the body suffers or anticipates a trauma, our instinctual reflex is to clench these deep muscles.

The problem is, we don't let go.

Unless we create time to consciously unwind these hardworking (easily frightened) muscles, which are some of the biggest in the body (for example, your glutes) they simply continue to tighten and tighten.

The message here is that you won't win the hips over with force.

NEVER FORCE

Hip Opening is a fantastic place to experience “less is more.” Especially, for us over achievers

Think about it:

Do you always sink into your *deepest* pigeon right away? Or do you take your time and settle in slowly, playing a little behind your edge so the body can truly relax?

REMEMBER: If the stretch is too intense, your body cannot relax and feel safe, and no healing can take place.

Especially as we take a Yin and Myofascial approach with the hips, it's essential to be a bit behind your edge. You're not going to be able to breathe comfortable in your most extreme pigeon for 8 minutes!



3. BE PATIENT

If Hip Opening were a sport, the winning tactic would be **PATIENCE**.

Perhaps more than any other area of the body, the number of muscles involved (and the large size of many of them) means that the hips require TIME to open and unwind. 10 breaths in a twice a week pigeon pose is *not* going to cut it.

We already know fascia (interconnective tissue) takes 3 - 5 minutes to rehydrate and unwind. For the hips, this Myofascial, Yin approach is best.

The more patient you can be, staying in hip opening postures as long as possible, the more progress you'll see in your flexibility.

This is why I suggest you **Always be Stretching**, all the time.



4. THINK 3-Dimensionally

One of my favorite things to do in pigeon pose is think about my hips in 3D.

In particular, instead of the back of the hip (or the back diagonal of my seat) opening behind me, with the energy traveling back and down.

For me, the goal of poses like pigeon isn't to get my torso as low as possible or to reach my head to the floor.

My goal is to deeply unwind tension in my hips.

Therefore, the best torso position is the one which best helps facilitate that goal.

Some days this may mean laying the torso on the floor. Other days it may mean staying active and upright, or using blocks.

I personally like to press my hands down into the floor and upright my torso so I can really send energy down and back into my hips 3-dimensionally a lot of the time.

The hips are completely different day-to-day so you need to always approach them with curiosity and an open mind.

YOUR PROGRESSION IS NOT LINEAR

Don't expect to perform the same variations in pigeon one day after the other and for them to feel the same way. Instead, constantly listen to the body and adjust.

5. BREATHE

Feeling your breath in your legs, arms or hands is hard. But you can TOTALLY feel your breath in your hips if you focus on it.

Every hip opening stretch we do, you'll receive 10X the benefit if you truly send your breath deep down into your hips.

Use visualizations to make this work, and remember: it's OK if this isn't clicking for you right away. It's a learned skill.

VISUALIZATION YOU CAN WORK WITH:

- Picture a small campfire or flame at the center of your hip. As you breathe in, visualize your inhale oxygenating the fire so the embers glow brighter.
- Imagine someone's hand cupped around your outer of your hip, placed there with loving care. Breathe into that area so big that you can picture the person's hand moving, rising up.
- Think of your hips expanding back, down, and side-to-side, like a balloon you're blowing up on your inhale. So you're puffing up your hips with more air.



On exhales, always just think about softening everything.

I want you to think about how you can keep your crunching "sit up"-type movements as controlled and small as possible. Amp it up by exhaling deeply and squeezing the cheeks of the seat and thighs together like crazy. Don't crane the neck to get your head way off the floor. Don't ever sit all the way up (like old school gym sit ups), unless specifically instructed.

Focus on feeling your burn. Once you generate a burn in your abs, stay IN it (often this means just holding still and exhaling).

Staying small and controlled with your movements is going to protect your neck and low back, and fire up your abs way more than doing big movements.

before we begin....

Let's review the pigeon pose:



Watch the video now.

WEEK ONE

Monday

RELAX INTO YOUR HIPS

20 MIN

Use this class as a hip self-assessment. Don't go to your deepest place. Back off as needed.

Our goal with this class is to let the hips know we'll be working with them this month and that our approach will be both tender and easeful. Focus on how relaxed you can be in these poses instead of seeking a deep stretch.

[Do this class now](#)

Wednesday

HIPS + HAMSTRINGS

35 MIN

Now we add movement. Find your personal rhythm as we seesaw into the hips here. It's OK to be ahead of or behind my call.

Hopefully, my crazy sound effects help you drop into these “wave”-type motions.

Think about water (also the quality of the Sacral Chakra, residing at the pelvis and related to this area of the hips) through this class. Our aim is to find fluidity.

Do this class now

Friday



An oldie but a goodie...Remember my tip about “breathing into the back door of your hip,” and thinking about your hips as a three dimensional space?

That’s the concept we go deeper with in this class.

Take note which of the many pigeon variations in this sequence provoke the best stretch for you.

Do you feel the hips opening more (notice I wrote “opening,” not “stretching”) with the torso lower to the floor? Or higher up? Or with blocks?

Remember, breathe, breathe, breathe.

Do this class now

DEEP flow FOR YOUR hips

65 MIN



extended
Weekend
class

Pep talk – the purpose of this class is NOT to come into full Birds of Paradise, but rather to open the hips and be fully present where you are. This is a great hip opening flow mirroring concepts we’ve already explored in the training plan.

Your body has done parts of this sequence before. So go deeper with time and really try to find that oceanic, wave-like quality in the hips. We’ll come back to this one later, so if you want to take a photo or mental note of your Birds of Paradise (or how close you got to this pose) go for it. It will be fun to have as a “before” shot when we do this again later.

[Do this class now](#)

WEEK TWO

Monday

DEEP RELAXATION + HIP OPENING WITH MUSIC

30 MIN

Let's repeat the cycle with a gentle approach to kick-off the week. There's not much to say about this one.

Dim the lights. Diffuse some essential oil or sage. Bliss out.

Do this class now

Wednesday



A playful flow to power you through your week.

This is a great 20-minute class to come back to anytime you want a workout that massages into

[Do this class now](#)

Friday

DATE NIGHT WITH THE WALL

30 MIN

Your Friday night date – **the wall!**

Move furniture, clear your schedule, make it happen.

Feel free to light candles or take a hot bath before or after. Hopefully this is an awesome first date you'll never forget.

Bonus tip: If you have an eye beanbag or pillow, place it over your face in all these poses for even deeper relaxation.

Do this class now

gentle yoga NECK + HIPS

45 MIN



extended
Weekend
class

In this one, we move deeply, yet gently. Enjoy this extended weekend practice.

[Do this class now](#)

WEEK THREE

Monday



Hip opening requires mental stamina (not just physical) to release deep-seated tension that may have been suppressed for decades.

Today, we meditate on the lower three chakras, our safety, our security, our sexuality, our willpower. All of these energetic centers are woven through this region of the body.

Do this class now

Wednesday

YIN FOR TIGHT HIPS

45 MIN

This class is pure deliciousness, and it opens the side body too!

A bolster is required, but remember you can always create a bolster using pillows and blankets. If you don't have 45-minutes to practice, swap this one with Friday's class.

[Do this class now](#)

Friday

LAZY STRETCHES ALL LEVELS

10 MIN

A short practice you may have encountered before, this class gets us deep into the hips in just 10-minutes.

[Do this class now](#)

extended
Weekend
class

HOUR OF (Y)IN-DULGENCE

60 MIN

Time to simply absorb all the work we've put forth thus far. In this Yin/Restorative practice, think about Receptivity. Fully allow yourself to receiving the benefits of your three weeks of practice thus far.

Remember, the hips cannot be forced. We must dance with them. This weekend is a time to restore and settle into our bodies in a deeper way.

Do this class now

WEEK FOUR

Monday

YIN FOR HIPS & IT BAND

20 MIN



Having settled into the hips for three weeks, we shift our focus to the IT Band specifically in order to notice how these areas are deeply interconnected.

If you're craving something more active (or have less time to practice), swap this with Wednesday's class.

[Do this class now](#)

Wednesday

IT BAND STRETCH

10 MIN

A quick IT Band flow. Keep this one in your back pocket as a great go-to sequence for after runs or long hikes.

If you're craving more, sprinkle in classes from Week 1.

This is our final hurrah!

Do this class now

Friday

STRETCH+ MEDITATION ALL LEVELS

40 MIN



Tuning back into the meaty area of our hips and our subtle energy, drop into this practice and release fully.

[Do this class now](#)

DEEP flow FOR YOUR hips

65 MIN



extended
Weekend
class

Coming full circle, weave your way through this flow again and notice what feels different. No judgment. Just movement.

[Do this class now](#)

let me know...

How did a full month of hip opening go for you?

Post thoughts, questions and pictures in our
[Private Facebook Group](#)

Have a friend who you think would love this training plan and videos?

Invite them to join you in Uplifted by sending them this link:

www.brettlarkin.com/uplifted/

“From my
heart to yours,
namaste”



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