



Are Blocks For Wimps? The use of props when practicing yoga

What are props?

Props are any aid that helps you to access a yoga posture more fully. Standard yoga props include blocks, bricks, straps, cushions, blankets, bolsters, sand bags; but walls, tables, chairs, other furniture, balls, books, neck ties, socks, etc, etc, can be used as props too.

Some people may consider that if they use props when they practice yoga they are somehow cheating. But wise use of props is a great way to enhance your experience and to boost your yoga practice.

Why use props in a yoga practice?

The use of props in yoga is an highly effective way of enhancing your practice. Props can help you deepen your investigation of the posture/shape you are making with your body, allowing you to experience it with a greater effectiveness, ease and stability. They allow you to make the pose work for you and to really access your body. They provide support for the body and when the body is supported the mind can relax. When the mind is relaxed you can deepen your exploration of the pose(s) and thus maximize potential benefits.

How can props help?

Props can help in many ways when you're practicing yoga, helping you become more flexible and adaptable, both physically and mentally. They can help to alter your experience of yoga poses/positions by:

- Making them more accessible.
- Creating optimal body alignment.
- Creating length & space in the body.
- Encouraging work within a safe & effective range of motion.
- Bringing balance between the qualities of effort and ease.
- Providing support for the bones enabling muscles to release.
- Increasing comfort in a pose/posture.
- Enhancing therapeutic or restorative qualities of a posture.

How to use props?

Let your body be your guide. If you sense a part of the body needs extra support they place a block/blanket/bolster/rolled up sock beneath that area. If you are unsteady balancing on one leg, stand close to a wall. If you need to add a little length to your arms, use a strap. If you find it difficult to sit without slumping, sit on block(s).

Explore whether varying the size/position of your prop alters your experience. Explore poses/positions with and without props to explore.

Be ingenious, curious and open minded. Remember that having a strong yoga practice is about making the poses perfect for your body and not about doing the poses as they appear in a book. And if props can help – then use props!!!!

Enjoy!

