

1 – Lotus requires an astounding degree of flexibility at the hip joint. Padmasana requires around 115 degrees of external rotation at the hip joint. If this is combined with a forward bend as in Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana then the external rotation jumps to around 145 degrees. To give you an idea of what that actually means it would be the ability to stand up straight and rotate your legs so that your knee caps are actually pointing towards the back. How many of us can do that?

2 – Only if a student can achieve the required amount of hip rotation can they safely lift their foot across to the opposite thigh without sideways pressure on the knee. The meniscus cartilage in the knee moves backwards and forwards. Bending the knee moves the cartilage forwards whilst laterally rotating the leg moves it backwards. If you attempt to do the two movements at once then you risk a tear in the cartilage as it is being pulled in both directions at once. It is the knee that is usually injured in Padmasana and it's usually the second knee to be lifted into place that is most vulnerable. This is because it is impossible to fully flex the knee and get it into position; flexing and rotating happen at the same time.

3 – it's possible to cheat, subconsciously of course. Students may be opening up their hips in Baddha Konasana and they appear to be slumped. They may have reached the pose by tipping their pelvis backwards allowing the pelvis and thigh to move as a single unit. This requires less rotation of the femur. They may think they are working on hip opening but if they are unable to sit up straight in the pose then they are not and you really need to talk them down to a simpler pose that will give them the opening they need.

So, how do we assist it to bloom?

1 – Work on hip mobility. The road to lotus is long and littered with good intentions but it shouldn't be attempted until you have mastered Baddha Konasana, Agnistambhasana and Ardha Padmasana.

2 – Adjust with caution. A lot of the knee injuries associated with lotus are not due to unwise students but to teachers adjusting without appreciating that the students does not have the required flexibility. A student in Baddha Konasana who is slumped might not have the flexibility to straighten the spine in that pose. If you assist then you both risk the students knee joints. Encourage the student to self adjust but encourage patience even more.

3 – Sometimes the greatest yogic moment is the acceptance of self. Maybe your personal anatomy will not allow you to perform Padmasana. Tight muscles can be worked on, tight ligaments less so but bone to bone restrictions deep in the hip are not going to change. You may just need to accept that your lotus may not flower, and you need to bloom without it.



#### About Janet Philp

Janet Philp has spent a lifetime exploring fitness and wellbeing. Starting as group exercise, travelling through rugby to representing UK at martial arts before including yoga, meditation, Budokon and personal instruction. Her passion is anatomical function and

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