

## Discovery Exercise

What does it feel like to let a muscle 'go'? What do we mean when we say 'feel a muscle relaxing, letting go of the stretch'? Here's an exercise that will help you be more aware of the feeling of your muscles releasing and relaxing. It will also help you understand the exact size and shape of your muscles and feel when they're 'engaging' during stretches.

Do this any time of day, anywhere. It will help you prepare for doing the *Fifteenth Sixteenth* and *Seventeenth Breathing Themes*.

Ball your hand up into a tight fist  
Quickly release the fist. Relax your hand.

- Notice the muscles in your lower arm as they relax.
- Notice how the muscles feel like they're lengthening (which they are).
- Notice them "softening" and "dissolving".
- See the muscles in your wrist "flattening" as you loosen your fist.

This happens to many muscles when you release a yoga pose. It's very helpful to be aware of that feeling of your muscles relaxing, "flattening out" as they release tension.

If you've been giving yourself time in between yoga stretches, you'll be very familiar with that feeling by now. (If not, see *Working with the Fourth Breathing Theme*.)

By doing this exercise, and by waiting after each yoga pose to feel your muscles relaxing and letting go, you'll be getting a sense of the size and shape of your different muscles. You'll probably notice how your muscles "talk to you" while they're releasing their tension after the pose is done. This has been helping you get to know your body and build a rapport with it.

Once the muscles feel "flattened", once they've "stopped talking", they've returned to their neutral state and are ready to work for you again. They need to be completely recovered from the last stretch to give you their best in the next stretch.

You can try this discovery exercise with many muscles in your body. Tense and release them. See if you can discover their exact size and shape. Can you detect the exact moment the tension is completely gone?

As you prepare for the Green Level *Fifteenth, Sixteenth* and *Seventeenth Breathing Themes*, do your yoga poses paying close attention to that feeling of the tension dissolving out of your muscles as you let the pose go.