

# warrior II

# Virabhadrasana II

Adam Bornstein explores this dynamic asana which develops physical and mental vigour, resilience under stress, and concentration.

*“In Radiant Light Yoga this pose is called Earth Warrior. Through this asana we embody groundedness, stability, strength and a connection to the Earth.” – ADAM BORNSTEIN*

Virabhadrasana derives its name from a mighty warrior who brought righteousness to the universe. Once, long ago, there was a King by the name of Daksha. Because of his egotistical arrogance, injustice was rampant in the world. Shiva Mahadev, Lord of all that is, and king of the yogis, decided to awaken King Daksha to the folly of his ways. Shiva, reciting the appropriate mantra, pulled out a lock of his matted hair and threw it to the ground. Out of the earth arose a great hero named Virabhadra, the warrior friend (Vira – Warrior, Bhadra – friend).

Virabhadra flew off to the palace of Daksha, and, standing before this power-mad king, stepped forward and raised his mighty sword. This act is symbolised by the position of Virabhadrasana I. He then reached out his arms to the sides

and cleanly sliced off the proud head of King Daksha. This deed is represented by Virabhadrasana II.

Daksha's head symbolises the inflamed ego, run amuck without restraint or guidance. Shiva, out of his infinite compassion, appeared and placed a head on Daksha's neck, the head of a goat. Through this experience, Daksha became humble, open to truth, and sensitive to higher realities.

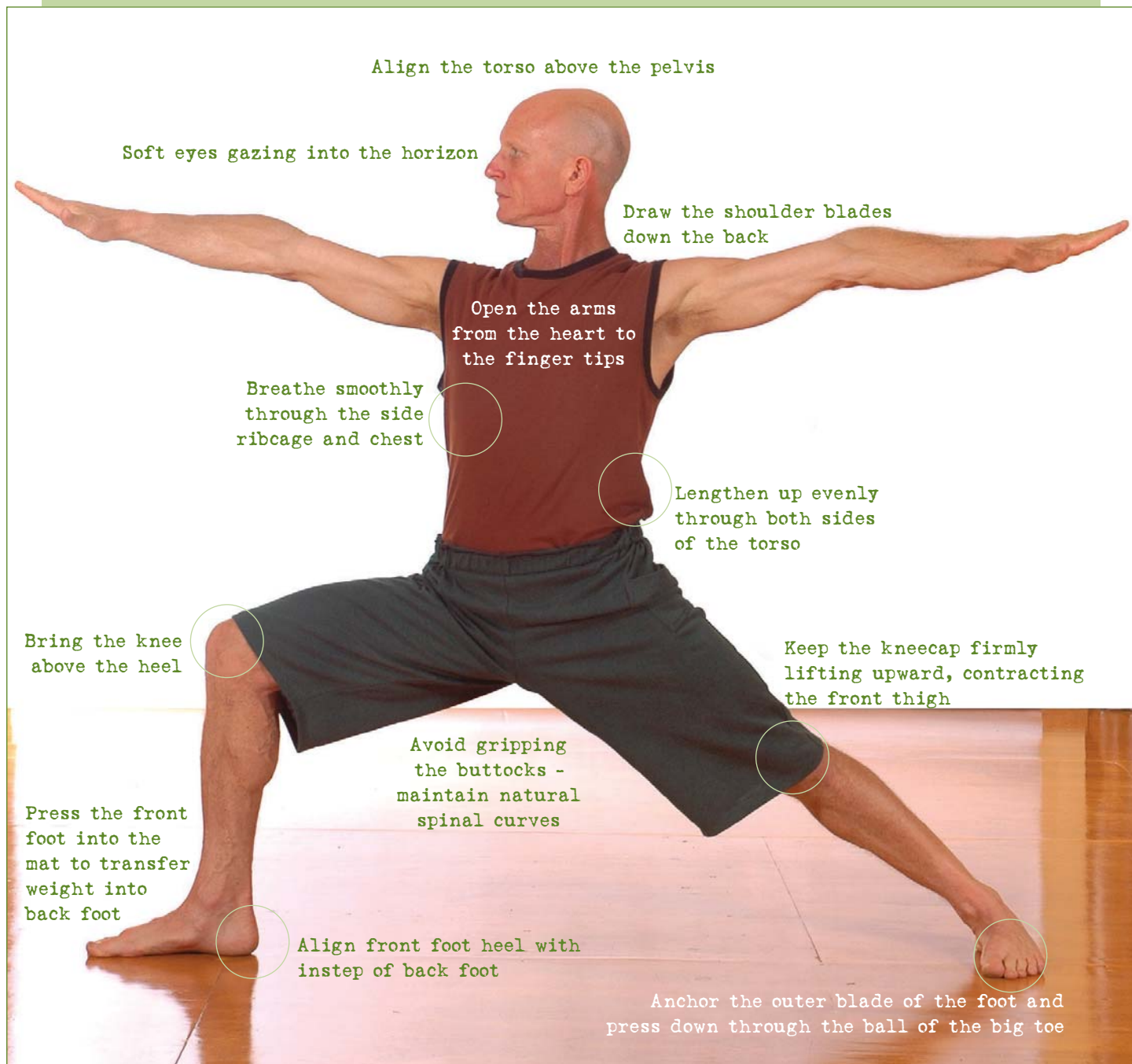
Every time you practise Virabhadrasana II, you have the opportunity to re-enact this divine drama. Perhaps you can recognise some of King Daksha's traits in your own self – traits such as self-centredness, arrogance, and resistance to wisdom.

As you prepare and enter into Virabhadrasana II, you have a golden opportunity to consciously sever the

head of your own pain-producing traits and, having done so, redirect your energy and consciousness towards a higher octave of being.

The physical template of the pose – wide open and stable stance, tall spine, expansive heart, and steady gaze – naturally cultivates the powerful attributes of courage and equanimity. As you pause following the practice, absorb and integrate the attitude of a spiritual warrior.

This article will look at some key alignment points, a few common errors and how to remedy them, and a variation of the classic pose. Don't be satisfied with only reading about Virabhadrasana II – step onto your yoga mat and put the teachings into consistent practice. By doing so, you will reap the life-changing benefits of this dynamic asana.



As you practise Virabhadrasana II, feel all parts of the body working together to create the harmony of the pose. While all the alignment details are important, it is the bringing together of all the points that creates the asana. Be sure to maintain your concentration and a smooth flow of breath throughout the practice. Be especially aware of avoiding any pain in the knees. There is a very important teaching from the Yōga Sūtras (Chapter 2, verse 16), which states that the choices we make now

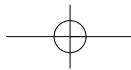
help us avoid any future suffering. Apply that teaching to your asana practice; do not sacrifice the safety of the body for an imposed outer appearance.

### Cautions

- Sacroiliac joint dysfunction
- Rotator cuff injuries.
- High blood pressure (keep hands at hips)

### Benefits

- Develops strength and stamina in the body and mind
- Aligns and strengthens the spinal column
- Opens the hip joints and inner thighs
- Increases circulation
- Improves breath capacity
- Cultivates even-mindedness and courage



## Virabhadrasana II

### [common errors]

#### 1. Front knee buckling inward

The alignment of the front knee is important in this pose. When the legs are straight, as in Trikonasana (Triangle pose), with the front thigh muscles engaged, the knees are safe and cannot twist. Any rotation that happens when the leg is straight comes from the hip joint. But when the knee is bent, there is the potential to over-rotate the knee joint, possibly injuring cartilage or ligaments. When you add weight-bearing, as in Virabhadrasana II, there can be additional stress in the joint. The front knee must clearly point towards the middle toe, rather than collapse inward. If you try to force the hips open in one plane (as if you were between two panes of glass), without having openness in the groin area, it will cause the front knee to rotate inward. A simple remedy is to steer the back hip slightly forward, to draw the knee above the ankle. In doing so, you will also find that the back leg has more power.



#### Incorrect



#### Correct



#### 2. Back knee side-bending

If the inner back knee collapses towards the floor, the weight will fall to the inner foot and the knee will be put under stress. To remedy, lift upwards through the inner leg and press down through the outer blade of the foot. To balance this action and avoid over stretching the outer ankle, also plant the ball

of the big toe into the floor. You will not only be protecting the sensitive tissues of the knee, you will feel more grounded and stronger. If the outer ankle still feels like it is over stretching, then practise the pose with the feet closer together. Remember to press the front foot into the floor to transfer weight into the back foot.



**Incorrect**



**Correct**



**3. Leaning forward with the torso**

When you lean forward over the front leg, it adds to the weight-bearing on the front knee and throws the whole pose off-centre. To observe yourself while in the pose, lower the chin towards the chest and look down the torso. If you are

leaning forward, press the front foot down and dynamically reach back with the back arm to draw yourself upright. As you transition to vertical, plant the back foot into the floor. Feel how balanced the pose becomes when the torso is situated above the pelvis.

**[virabhadrasana II variation]**

This variation is called Virachandrasana (Moon warrior pose).

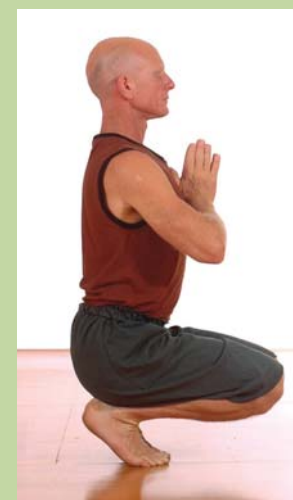
From Virabhadrasana II, inhale and turn the front palm up. Exhale and place the back palm on the outer back thigh. Inhaling, lift the front arm to the ear. Exhaling, slide the back hand down the leg, as you take the top arm over the ear. Breathe here, emphasising lifting the side of the chest towards the sky as you press down with the back hand.

Hold for a few breaths. Reverse the steps to come out of the pose.



**[counter poses]**

1. Prasarita Padottanasana (Intense leg stretch pose). Lengthen first and then release the entire spine with gravity.
2. Samatasana (Balanced pose). Draw the thighs into each other and keep the spine tall.





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The physical template of the pose naturally cultivates the powerful attributes of courage and equanimity. As you pause following the practice, absorb and integrate the attitude of a spiritual warrior.

### Conclusion

The standing asanas are at the core of developing physical and mental endurance. Holding Virabhadrasana II with physical integrity, concentration, and smoothness of breath cultivates a state of dynamic equilibrium. Like a deep ocean on a calm day, unruffled by wind or wave, your body, mind, and energy flow become stabilised. In this stability, you can begin to abide in the calmness that resides in your heart.

When you are on the yoga mat, you are not only practising poses, you are building character. What joy it is for practitioners to look back and realise the positive internal and external changes that have evolved through their yoga

practice. In the beginning, you may feel that all this discipline is getting you nowhere; but as you persist in your endeavour, you see that healthy discipline is the foundation of joy.

There is so much joy and satisfaction in knowing yourself, in having self-control, and in having the willpower to see things through to completion. And ultimately, there is the greatest fulfilment in being attuned to the higher Self.

Virabhadrasana II can be a pivotal pose to help awaken you to your already existing natural soul qualities of confidence and courage.

Enjoy your practice.

Adam Bornstein and his partner Akash are co-founders of Radiant Light Yoga. They have been devoted to learning, practising, and sharing yoga since 1980. They offer private tuition, classes, workshops, teacher training, and yoga therapy. Their recently completed teaching centre, Nataraja Yoga Temple welcomes all sincere students. [www.radiantlightyoga.com](http://www.radiantlightyoga.com)

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