**Saucha**

After the winter snow melts, the temperature warms and buds begin to push through the earth to absorb the healing power of the sun. I, too, find myself drawn to the sunshine, to throw open the curtains, raise the windows, and invite the cool, fresh, mountain air to flow into our home. Welcoming the freshness and purity of the mountain air reminds me of saucha, cleanliness or purity, and is one of the Niyamas, or moral observances, from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra. Just as the home is the dwelling place of our family, our body is known as the dwelling place of spirit. Yoga teaches us that we must purify our vessel so we can connect to our higher power. Cleansing prepares us for the awakening of energy within us, for experiencing the greatness of our spirit, and for clearing a pathway to connect to the Divine.

**Saucha of Inner Body**

* Eat healthy, prana-rich, seasonal and whole foods.
* Participate in a cleanse or a fast to reboot your system.
* Eat less meat and processed foods.
* Drink more water, and less alcohol and sugary drinks.
* Practice self-care including the use of a neti pot, tongue scraping, and drinking warm water to assist in bowel movements.
* Be consistent in your yoga practice and other exercise.
* Perform regular pranayama, like nadi shodhana, agni sara, and kapalabhati.

**Saucha of Outer Body**

* Perform abhyanga (Ayurvedic self-massage).
* Get regular professional massages or try Reiki at ICY.
* Take a relaxing bath, using Epsom salts, essential oils, and maybe even baking soda to draw out impurities.
* Take care of personal hygiene daily.
* Reduce products such as perfumes, lotions, anti-perspirants, and colognes made with chemicals. The skin is the largest organ of the body and these chemicals make their way into our bloodstream. Try oils for the skin instead, including sesame and coconut oil for moisture, and essential oils for fragrance.

**Saucha of Mind**

* “Where the mind goes, prana flows.” We each have a choice in how we act, and by directing our thoughts towards positivity, we can add positivity to our own lives and to the world around us.
* Watch judging, criticizing, and analyzing which may influence how we express our feelings. “Impure” thoughts might appear as judging someone who comes to a yoga class because she does not look like you or practice like you; judging ourselves for not achieving a goal at work; getting angry, stressed, worried, or fearful about a situation which may produce negativity toward ourselves or others.
* Meditate regularly, ideally every day. This is one of the most profound ways you can experience saucha. Remember, that where the mind goes, prana or energy flows. We have the power within our minds to think pure, kind, and compassionate thoughts, and therefore influence the level of purity around us. If there’s a problem in the world that we genuinely can’t change, worrying and getting angry isn’t going to help; instead, choose to meditate and send positive, pure thoughts towards the situation and add some goodness to the world.
* Try journaling to help process, reflect, and work through feelings and thoughts, rather than letting them get stuck or spiral to a dark or inaccurate place.
* Practice using the “beginner’s mind.” Imagine seeing the world through the eyes of a curious and delighted child, rather than with skepticism, pessimism, or the temptation to think you know how things will turn out.

**Saucha of Language**

* Watch your language. Check in with the words you choose to use and be sure it accurately represents who you are. We’ve all been around the negative thinker and talker who uses profanity, negative self-talk, and criticism of others. This drains us and them of essential life energy. If you are finding yourself influenced by negativity, use the pause before you share your thoughts; if what you are thinking is not nourishing, let it go. Try speaking more directly from the heart in a positive and compassionate way.
* Do not engage in gossip or low-vibration discussions. Attachment to drama and conflict interferes with serenity. Let go of the sense of satisfaction that comes from hearing and speaking of another’s misfortunes. Divert that energy to more positive endeavors like helping others, engaging in a productive hobby, and signing up for an online course to start to change your thought patterns. The result will be more positivity.
* Speak kindly to yourself and others. Ask yourself, are you engaging in behavior that interferes with another’s sense of peace and self-worth? Do you encourage and even delight in hearing and voicing negativity? If so, it’s time to make an honest evaluation about how your speech contributes to the energy around you.
* Use words sparingly. If they aren’t going to produce something positive, reframe or refrain.
* Use positive and open body language. Engage with others by looking them in the eyes when you speak with them; this lets them know you are giving them your full attention.

**Saucha of Relationships**

* Set boundaries. Get clear about what type of behavior will and will not be tolerated from others. Learn to say no.
* Clarify your expectations. Get clear about what you need from the people in your life, rather than expecting them to read your mind.
* Compassionately let go of toxic people and relationships in your life. Take responsibility for those you invite into your life. One of the hardest practices in saucha is releasing people who influence our energy in an unhealthy way. This could be the person who is constantly speaking negatively of others, pulling us off our center, or doing behaviors that are detrimental to themselves or others. Sooner or later, we must learn to release them. This process can be especially painful when our emotions and attachment are strong and long-standing. And while the initial phases of disconnect may be difficult, we will discover greater stability and comfort by limiting the impact they have on us or by releasing them from our lives. This process can be even more difficult when the person is a family member. Letting others go or limiting exposure to them doesn’t mean that we don’t love them; rather it means we are taking responsibility for how we walk in the world and with whom we choose to walk.
* Forgive. Rather than carrying the burden of blame, anger, and judgment, lighten your load by forgiving yourself and others who have caused harm.

 **Contemplation Exercises for Meditation:**

1. What are some of my habits that could benefit from the practice of saucha? How can I overcome these habits?
2. What are the common patterns in my home, workplace, car, etc. that can be improved upon?
3. What repetitive thought patterns do I have about myself or others that may be negative or impure? How can I incorporate cleanliness in my thought patterns and include positive, heathy thoughts about all?

**Suggested Asana for Saucha:**

All Twisting Poses help to cleanse and detoxify the digestive, urinary and circulatory systems. The following postures may be included in your daily yoga practice:

* Revolved Triangle
* Revolved Side Angle
* Revolved Squat
* Revolved Half Moon
* Revolved Seated Twist
* Revolved Half Pigeon
* Revolved Supine Twist

**Affirmations for Saucha that can be repeated daily:**

* My body is clean and pure; I eat consciously.
* My heart is pure, open, and loving.
* My mind is calm, thinking positive thoughts about myself and others.