

10-minute yoga **CALM**

75

poses and
sequences to
relax & restore



**Health
&Fitness**

Inside

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ▶
EXPERT INSTRUCTION ▶
MINDFULNESS TIPS ▶

£9.99

ISBN 1-78106-496-2
9 781781 064962

www.magbooks.com

WITH EVE BOGGENPOEL



save
30%

on your first order using
HFMAGMANUKA30
Free shipping over £75

Backless Botanical Top
Botanical Legging

 manukalifeyoga
 manukaLife
 manukalifeyoga

MANUKA LIFE. *

The luxury fitness brand for Yoga, Pilates and Loungewear
with a wide range of eco accessories. Don't just sweat, glow!



www.manukalife.com

Get your 30% discount with your first order
enter code HFMAGMANUKA30

This code is valid on all accessories and apparel at full price

Health&Fitness

10-minute yoga **CALM**

Yoga instruction Eve Boggenpoel

Words Eve Boggenpoel, Margaret Bartlett

Cover photography Danny Bird

Photography Danny Bird

Hair & make-up Rosie Kor @ Artistic Licence

Clothes From a selection at Asquith (asquithlondon.com); No Balls (noballs.co.uk);

Manduka (manduka.com); Manuka (manukalife.com)

Model Halla Koppel

Editor Mary Comber

Art editor Holly Hall

Sub-editors Margaret Bartlett, Sheila Reid

MagBook Publisher Dharmesh Mistry

Digital Production Manager Nicky Baker

Operations Director Robin Ryan

MagBook Advertising Manager Nin Virdi

Managing Director of Advertising Julian Lloyd-Evans

Newstrade Director David Barker

Publisher Nicola Bates

Group Managing Director Ian Westwood

Group Publisher Russell Blackman

Chief Operating Officer Brett Reynolds

Group Finance Director Ian Leggett

Chief Executive James Tye

Company Founder Felix Dennis



The MagBook brand is a trademark of Dennis Publishing Ltd. 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD. Company registered in England.
All material © Dennis Publishing Ltd, licensed by Felden 2016, and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the consent of the publishers.

10-minute Yoga Calm ISBN 1-78106-496-2

To license this product please contact Carlotta Serantoni on +44 (0) 20 79076550 or email carlotta_serantoni@dennis.co.uk

To syndicate content from this product please contact Ryan Chambers on +44(0) 20 7907 6132 or email Ryan_Chambers@dennis.co.uk

While every care was taken during the production of this MagBook, the publishers cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information or any consequence arising from it. Dennis Publishing takes no responsibility for the companies advertising in this MagBook. The paper used within this MagBook is produced from sustainable fibre, manufactured by mills with a valid chain of custody. Printed by Sterling Press Limited.

The health and fitness information presented in this book is an educational resource and is not intended as a substitute for medical advice. Consult your doctor or healthcare professional before performing any of the exercises described in this book or any other exercise programme, particularly if you are pregnant, or if you are elderly or have chronic or recurring medical conditions. Do not attempt any of the exercises while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Discontinue any exercise that causes you pain or severe discomfort and consult a medical expert.

Neither the author of the information nor the producer nor distributors of such information make any warranty of any kind in regard to the content of the information presented in this book.

*'Yoga does
not just change
the way we see
things, it
transforms
the person
who sees'*

BKS Iyengar



Contents

- 6 Welcome
8 How to use this book
10 About yoga
14 Yoga and relaxation

18 GETTING STARTED

- 20 Yoga basics
22 Yoga clothes and kit
26 Control your breath
30 Build a foundation
32 Get centred

34 THE WARM-UP

- 42 Sun salutation
44 Moon salutation

48 THE POSES

- 88 THE SEQUENCES
90 Morning grounding
92 Evening grounding
94 Calm anxiety
96 Boost confidence
98 Morning energiser
100 Lunchtime pick-me-up
102 Switch off from the day
104 Ease insomnia
106 Beat burnout

108 MEDITATION AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

- 118 Restorative sequences
120 Meditation on your mat
128 Directory
130 Farewell

Welcome

Some people have the ability to walk through life seemingly unaffected by stress and anxiety. Indeed, many thrive on it. I, perhaps like you, am not one of those people.

Learning to be kinder to ourselves when under pressure is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves. It's all too easy to battle on, often unaware of how we really feel or the impact the situation is having on our health and wellbeing. But asking for help, letting go of what you cannot change or making space in your day for just 10 minutes of yoga and meditation can help you find a supportive pathway through a difficult period in your life. That has certainly been my experience.

I wrote this book during a challenging family crisis. What I was reminded of, however, was the deeply healing power of yoga and meditation. Many of the sequences in this book arose out of my feelings and needs at the time. When I was particularly anxious, I compiled the Calm anxiety sequence (p94), using myself as a guinea pig. If it worked for me, it would work for another. If I had a poor night's sleep, I'd do the Morning energiser (p98) to check the poses were

sequenced in a way to uplift without being overtiring. And I experienced for myself just how effective Abdominal breathing (p27) can be at slowing down a racing heart rate.

The most dramatic proof of the calming benefits of yoga came when, after a particularly stressful day, I lay in a crumpled heap on the sofa, my jangled nerves 'buzzing' from overstimulation. Just 10 minutes later, after resting in Supported relaxation pose (p117), my body and mind felt transformed. My breath was calm, my body soothed and the previous exhaustion I felt had subsided to the point where I simply felt mildly tired.

Whatever brings you to this book, I encourage you to use it in whichever way works best for you. If you find a pose or sequence that resonates with you, practise it as long as it is helpful, then move onto something else when you need. Trust your instincts and your body. They know what's best for you.

Namaste,

Eve Boggengpoel
Author, *10-minute Yoga Calm*



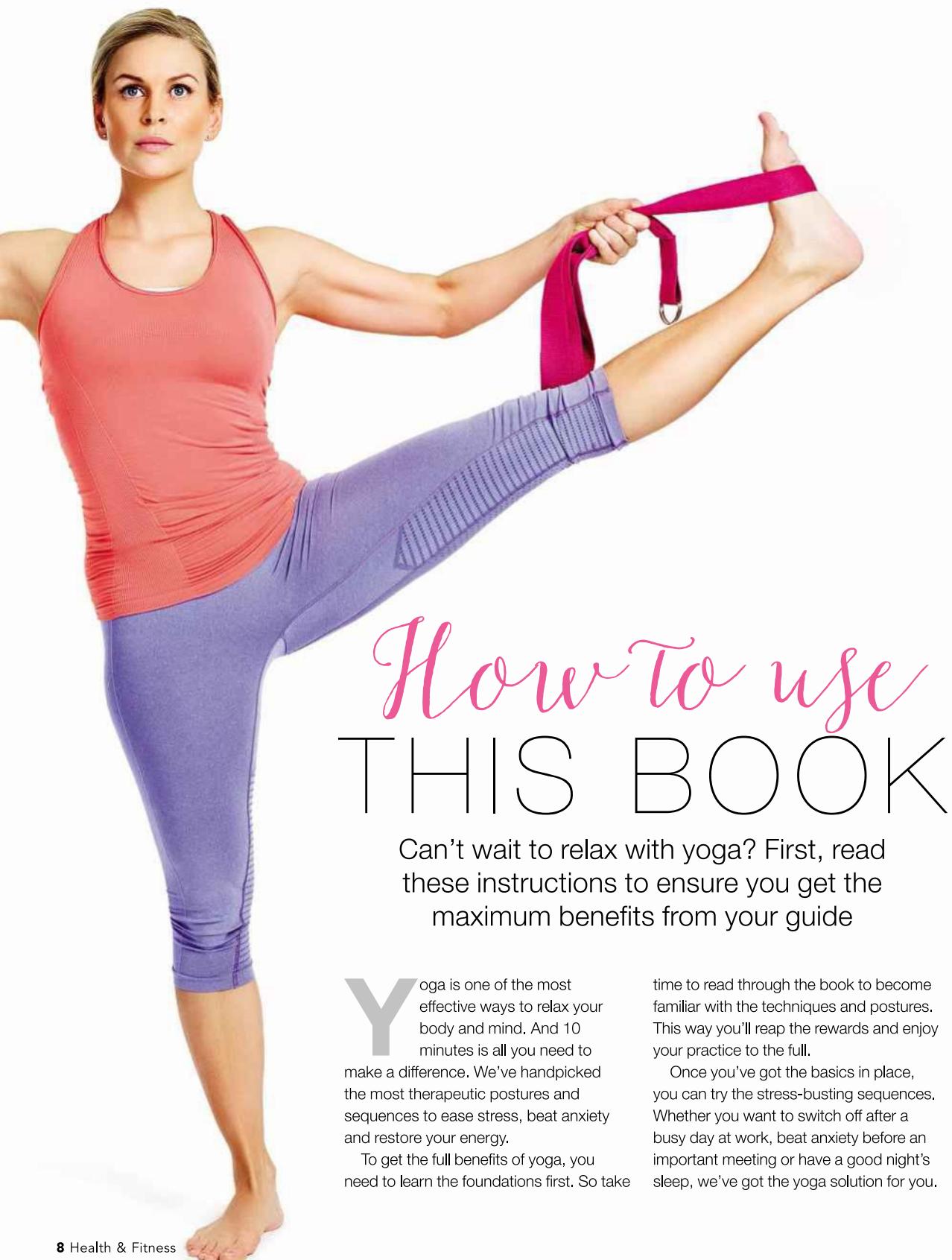
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eve Boggengpoel has been practising yoga and meditation for 25 years. Self-taught initially, her formal yoga journey began with a German Iyengar teacher when she learnt to value the significance of good alignment, and went on to include vinyasa and yin styles with inspirational teachers Shiva Rea, Sarah Powers and Simon Low.

In 2013, Eve studied to become a yoga teacher at triyoga in London, under the expert guidance of Mimi Kuo-Deemer and Jean Hall, and is a member of The British Wheel of Yoga. She is a qualified homeopath and health journalist, and in *10-minute Yoga Calm* brings together her intuitive understanding of healing and a deep appreciation of yoga and meditation.

| WELCOME |





How To use THIS BOOK

Can't wait to relax with yoga? First, read these instructions to ensure you get the maximum benefits from your guide

Yoga is one of the most effective ways to relax your body and mind. And 10 minutes is all you need to make a difference. We've handpicked the most therapeutic postures and sequences to ease stress, beat anxiety and restore your energy.

To get the full benefits of yoga, you need to learn the foundations first. So take

time to read through the book to become familiar with the techniques and postures. This way you'll reap the rewards and enjoy your practice to the full.

Once you've got the basics in place, you can try the stress-busting sequences. Whether you want to switch off after a busy day at work, beat anxiety before an important meeting or have a good night's sleep, we've got the yoga solution for you.

1. ABOUT YOGA

Discover just what yoga is and why it's clinically proven to aid relaxation and beat stress. Discover the benefits that just 10 minutes of yoga a day can bring your body and mind.

p10



2. LEARN THE BASICS

Here are the fundamentals you need to practise yoga. Discover how to breathe correctly and try the warm-up poses and sequences that will protect your body and boost the benefits.

p20



3. STRIKE A POSE

It's time to practise the postures that form the basis of *10-minute Yoga Calm*. Each posture comes with expert step-by-step instructions and suggestions to help you tailor the move to your level.

p48



4. YOGA CALM SEQUENCES

Now you've learnt the basics, we've put everything together into some stress-busting sequences. Whether you want to beat burnout, ease insomnia or unwind from the day, you'll find a 10-minute sequence to suit you.

p88



5. RESTORE YOURSELF

Give yourself a dose of yogic medicine with this selection of deeply relaxing restorative yoga postures and sequences. Beautifully simple but profoundly effective, they'll bring your body and mind back into balance for a more centred you.

p108



6. BE MINDFUL

You've eased your body, now rest your mind with our easy meditation and mindfulness exercises. Don't worry, there's no hours of chanting or sitting in Lotus position. These simple mindfulness exercises will help you let go of your worries in minutes.

p120



*'Do your
practice and
all is coming'*

Sri K Pattabhi Jois



About YOGA

More than just a physical workout, yoga also calms and focuses the mind, bringing a host of benefits from easing pain to alleviating stress

In the West, yoga is often seen simply as a way to stretch and condition the body. But this ancient practice is so much more than that. Yoga is a complete system of exercise, breathing, meditation and relaxation that helps you deal with the demands of life. Far from just a feel-good workout, it has a host of clinically proven physical and mental benefits, from easing aches and pains and reducing blood pressure to alleviating insomnia, depression and stress.

THE ROOTS

Yoga originated around 5,000BC from an ancient Indian philosophy called Vedanta, which emphasises the connection between mind and body. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means 'yoke' or 'union'. This is because over time, doing yoga helps connect your body and mind, bringing you closer to understanding and being more compassionate to yourself. In today's busy world, yoga can give you the space to breathe

and reconnect to your body's needs.

Around 2,500 years ago in India, an author and sage named Patañjali wrote the first real practical yoga guide – a book called *The YogaSutras*. Patañjali defined yoga with the Sanskrit phrase 'citti-vrtti-nirodhah' which translates as 'the cessation of the turnings of the mind'. Even today, the basic definition of yoga has changed little. It's ultimately about stilling the chatter in your mind through focus – whether that is on your alignment and breath when doing postures, or on a mantra, your breath or an object during a breathing exercise or meditation.

THE EVOLUTION

In the 20th century, teachers from India developed different forms of hatha yoga. BKS Iyengar created the structured Iyengar form, while Sri K Pattabhi Jois created the dynamic ashtanga style. In the second half of the century, yoga began to flourish in the West as

enthusiasts travelled to India and brought their knowledge back home.

Now, there are many hybrids, from hot yoga to dynamic yoga. But certain elements are always present: focus, centring and a returning to our inner selves and a more peaceful state.

YOGA AND YOU

While the human mind tends to focus on the past or future, the body exists only in the present. Coming back to your body through yoga postures brings your mind back to the present moment. And for that moment, your worries drop away – you're fully connected to your body.

The more you practise, the stronger your body will become and the more powerfully connected you will feel to your body. The more connected to your body you feel, the less you'll be susceptible to the stresses and strains of everyday life. A calm mind, stronger body and glowing skin are just some of the benefits you'll reap from regular practice.

The five pillars...

The main aim of yoga is to bring your body and all its cravings, passions, worries and urges under the control of your mind. Indian sage Patañjali defined yoga through methods such as controlling your breath and holding your body in steady poses – these days, known as hatha yoga.

Today, yoga has evolved into many modern-day hybrids – from the physically challenging ashtanga and Bikram yoga to restorative yin and meditative raja yoga. But the basic principles of hatha yoga remain the same and can be broken down into five essential principles that create a total conditioning system for your body.

EXERCISE In yoga, exercise takes the form of ‘asanas’ or postures (see page 48) which lubricate, strengthen, stretch and tone your body. Though they can be demanding, yoga asanas are different from other forms of exercise as they incorporate both challenge and recovery. Rather than only focusing on dramatically expending energy, yoga focuses on conserving and renewing your energy, so that after each session you’ll feel refreshed and energised.

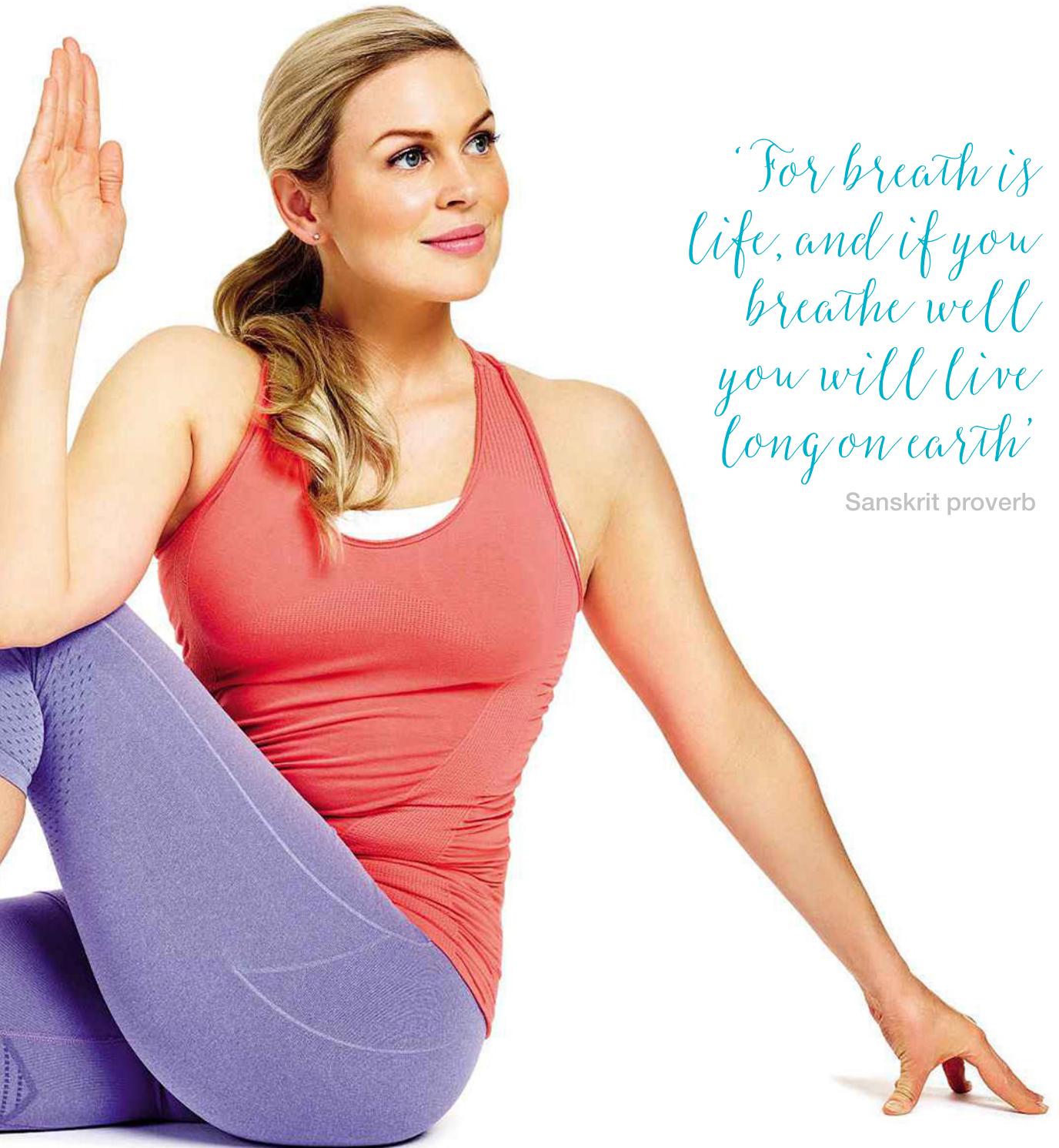
BREATHING Correct breathing deepens your yoga practice and has a direct impact on your nervous system. A range of yogic breathing techniques, known as pranayama, can help calm, restore and energise your body and mind (see page 27). Your breath links your body to your solar plexus, located deep in your navel where potential energy is stored and created. The yoga breath helps release this energy for mental and physical restoration.

RELAXATION Yoga recognises that proper, regular relaxation releases tension and allows you to make new energy, even when you’re tired and overworked. Relaxation is therefore a central part of any yoga practice. The most powerfully restoring posture is Savasana (p87) where you lie flat, face up, with your eyes closed. This is used at the end of yoga practice or in between demanding poses. According to yoga experts, it’s among the most important of all postures as it’s the time when your body assimilates the accumulated benefits of the preceding practice. Don’t be tempted to skip it!

MEDITATION Meditation and mindfulness – even a few minutes a day – are an essential part of yoga because they help control, focus and refresh your mind. But, don’t worry, meditation doesn’t have to mean sitting in Lotus position for hours. Mindfulness meditation simply requires observing your thoughts as though they’re clouds in the sky, shifting and changing. Or try the simple meditation exercises on page 120. Your meditation can take place at the end of your yoga practice or for 10 minutes in the morning. You can even do it for a minute on the bus or train or between meetings. A little regular meditation done often is better than a lot, done sporadically.

DIET Yoga philosophy recommends a diet of simple, natural foods that are easily digested to promote good physical and mental health. Ideally vegetarian, a yogic diet should include fruit, vegetables, grains, leafy greens, dairy produce, pulses, nuts and seeds. Eating mindfully until you are only 80 per cent full is also recommended.





'For breath is life, and if you breathe well you will live long on earth'

Sanskrit proverb

Stretch away STRESS

Whether you're anxious about a job interview, burnt out from working too hard or struggling to sleep, discover how just 10 minutes of yoga a day can help you feel better

While many yogis first start practising yoga for the flexibility and body benefits it brings, most will tell you that it's the benefits for their mind and wellbeing that keep them hooked. However tired, stressed or anxious you are before you start a yoga session, you're guaranteed to emerge from your session feeling renewed and soothed.

BALANCE YOUR BODY

Yoga has both short- and long-term benefits for your mental health. By relaxing your muscles and stretching key nerves that link your joints to your mind, yoga can have profoundly de-stressing benefits in just 10 minutes. Practise it more regularly and science shows you'll lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol which is responsible for burn out and exhaustion. It also primes your organs' repair systems so your entire endocrine system is more balanced. One Swedish study found that yoga was as effective at reducing stress as cognitive behavioural therapy.

THE STRESS RESPONSE

We're all familiar with the symptoms of stress – a racing heart, nagging anxiety, sleepless nights, feelings of exhaustion.

Whatever the cause – a heavy workload, argument with a partner, money worries – if your mind interprets an event as a threat, this triggers a stress response in your body and activates the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) which is responsible for your 'fight or flight' mechanism. Meanwhile, your parasympathetic system (PNS), responsible for relaxation and calm, is suppressed by this response and your body is flooded with stress hormones, such as cortisol, which prime your senses and focus your mind, ready for attack.

In the short term, this survival mechanism is just what you need to tackle a challenge but, on an ongoing basis, the fight-or-flight stress cycle takes its toll on your body, leading to conditions such as insomnia, depression, aches and pains and weight gain.

CALM YOURSELF

Yoga gives your body the tools it needs to respond and deal with stress in a healthier way, allowing your PNS to bring you back into a state of balance. One scientific study found that six weeks of hatha yoga increased activation of the PNS. Another study revealed that just one session of yoga can aid the nervous system.

How does it work? For a start,

many yoga poses such as Forward bend (p52) or Child's pose (p78) have a direct effect on your body's stress response, altering your heart rate, breath and mental state. But in addition, learning to hold challenging yoga poses with a calm, focused mind and controlled breath helps teach you how to deal with external stress in a calm, controlled way.

Gradually, your ANS imprints this response and allows you to harness it during everyday stressful times. Just as your body can learn a new physical skill, such as mastering a tricky yoga pose, your brain and body can learn a new way to deal with stress. Practise yoga regularly and you'll soon feel ready to take on the world and deal with anything life throws at you!

'Yoga is the practice of quieting the mind'

Patanjali



Why relaxation is key

Rest and relaxation is a basic human need. Yet these days we often fail to give ourselves the essential downtime we need. But why is relaxation so essential? When you're working hard – physically or mentally – or you're going through a stressful period, your body releases stress hormones, such as adrenaline, to give you the energy to cope. However, if these hormones are constantly released into the body, they can damage your wellbeing, disrupting your sleep, playing havoc with your weight and skin, and eventually leading to burn out and accelerated ageing. One of the fastest ways to dissipate the body's stress hormones is to switch on your relaxation response using yoga.

3 Top RELAXATION

Yoga calm benefits

Following the postures and sequences in this book will:

- Lower your heart rate
- Calm your breathing
- Beat anxiety
- Reduce stress
- Ease depression
- Boost your mood
- Raise your energy
- Deepen your sleep

CHILD'S POSE (p78)

This soothing pose encourages deeper breathing, relieves stress and calms you while stretching and easing any upper-body tension.



SAVASANA (p 87)

Many yoga classes start and end with this ultimate relaxation pose. It brings your body into the present, stabilises your breath, relaxes your muscles and restores your body after exertion.



POSES

While all yoga helps you relax, unwind and revive, some moves have a particularly therapeutic effect

FORWARD BEND (p52)

This deeply relaxing pose calms a busy brain and relieves fatigue while building strength. Used during your practice, it helps you recover from challenging poses.



*10 minutes
is all
you need*

Even 10 minutes a week of yoga is better than nothing – and it's a great place to begin. But once you start to feel the restorative and energising effects that just 10 minutes of yoga can bring, you'll soon want to find time to do more.





Getting STARTED

If you're just discovering what yoga is all about or are wanting to deepen your home practice, the following pages have everything you need to get started.

Discover the breathing exercises or pranayama that can take your practice to another level, soothing your nervous system and energising your entire body. Find out which props are essential for supporting your alignment and warm up with gentle asanas and sequences. Then, enjoy some in-depth work on the wonderfully restorative Sun and Moon salutations.



Yoga BASICS

Don't rush straight into your yoga positions. Tune into your body and do warm up poses to avoid any injuries

A friend of mine has a blog entitled 'the mat is my friend', which is a wonderful way to approach your yoga practice.

Each time you get on your mat, it's an opportunity to get to know yourself more and to discover what it means to listen to and trust your body – which is, after all, your best teacher. Your body knows its limits, and will soon let you know all about it if you push it too hard. On the other hand, if you respond to what it needs, whether that's a fast-paced wake-up routine or a calming evening sequence, you'll invariably feel better after your session than when you began.

There may be times when you feel frustrated at not being able to do a pose in the way you'd like but everyone is different, and your unique anatomy will have a significant impact on which postures are easy for you and which are challenging. Here's a simple example: it's not just your flexibility that determines whether you can touch your toes in a sitting forward fold, it also depends on the length of your arms.

How you approach yoga is likely to be a reflection of how you treat yourself in life. So notice if you push yourself when you get on your mat. Or are you self critical when you find a posture difficult? Your yoga journey is an opportunity to encounter yourself on

a deep level. If you can, meet yourself with kindness and compassion.

CHECKING IN

When you're driven by stress, it can take a while to peel away the layers of activity and to tune in to what you're feeling beneath the surface. A useful time to do this is when you're warming up. Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and, after a few centring breaths, bring your attention to the area below your navel and ask yourself how you feel physically.

Then become aware of your heart area and tune into how you feel emotionally. Finally, take your attention to the space between your eyebrows, and connect to what you're thinking. Once you have a clearer sense of how you are now, simply acknowledge it and allow the understanding to recede into the background as you return your attention to your breath.

WARMING UP

If you prepare your body for yoga practice, you're less likely to sustain injuries. Ideally, an effective warm-up will move your spine in three planes of movement – flexion and extension (forward bends and back bends), a lateral stretch and a twist. Some warm-up poses are chosen to target muscles you're using in the main sequence, so that

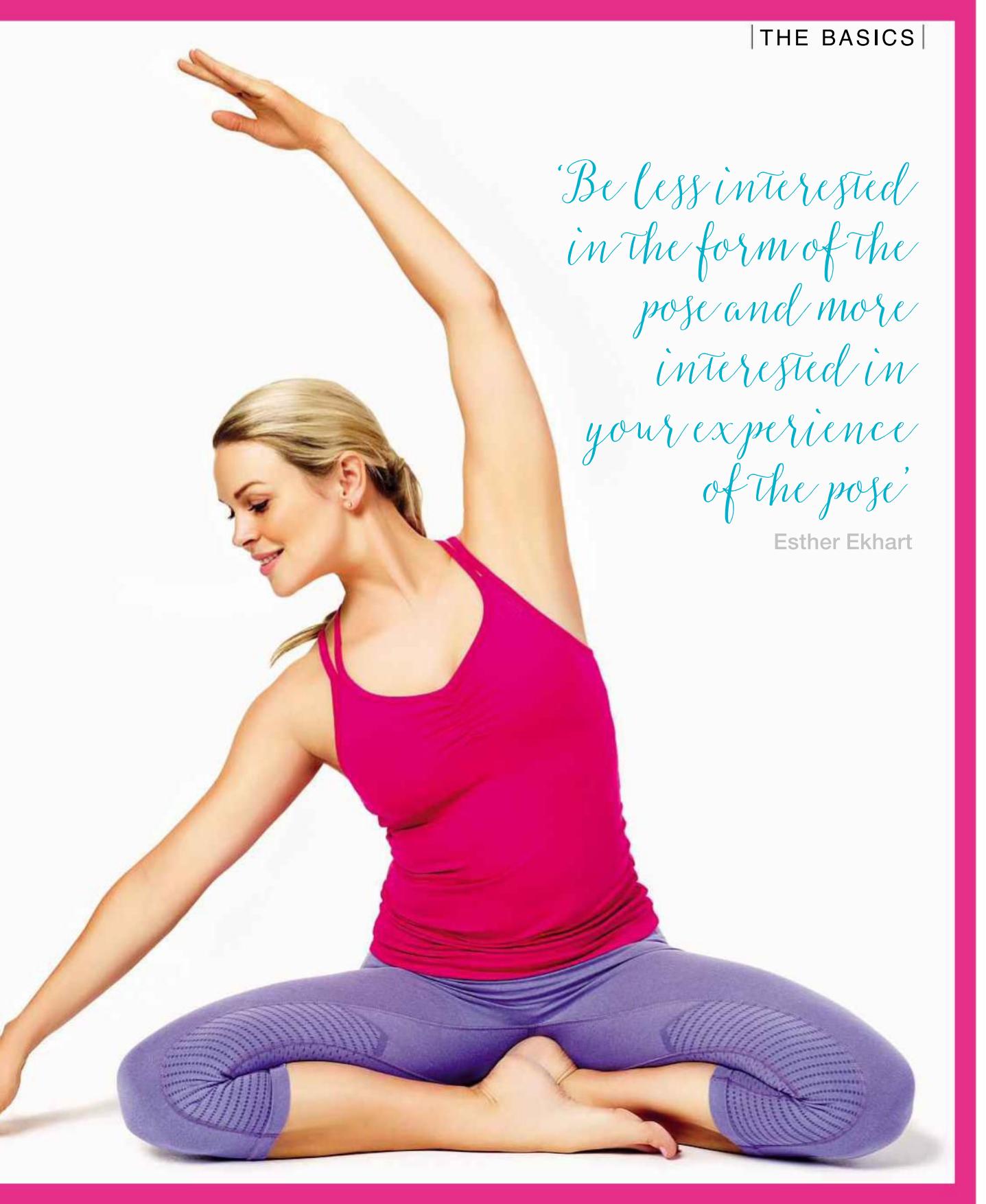
when you come to do the full pose, you don't over work the muscle.

FORWARD BENDS: Folding forward from the hips, whether in a standing or seated position, is a key technique for reducing stress. When your head is lower than your heart, it calms the brain and rests your circulation system.

BACK BENDS: Gentle back bends create space in the front of your body and open the heart area. Not only does this support a deeper breath, it can help you learn to be a little kinder to yourself. This is very necessary when you're under pressure.

SIDE BENDS: As well as being refreshing, expanding your spine on a lateral plane opens the side ribs, helping you breathe more deeply. This activates your para-sympathetic nervous system, bringing a feeling of calm.

TWISTS: These compress and release the muscles and organs of your torso, helping remove built-up tension and improve blood circulation to the area, which floods it with nutrients. Lengthening your spine before twisting creates space between the vertebra, allowing for safer and deeper twists.

A woman with blonde hair tied back is performing a seated side stretch yoga pose. She is sitting on the floor with her legs bent and feet flat against the floor. Her right leg is bent at the knee and she is reaching her right arm up towards the ceiling. Her left leg is extended straight out to the side. She is wearing a bright pink tank top and purple leggings. The background is plain white.

*'Be less interested
in the form of the
pose and more
interested in
your experience
of the pose'*

Esther Ekhart

Get EQUIPPED

Not sure which yoga props and clothing you need to use and invest in, if any? Discover the essentials with our kit guide

The props

One of the many wonderful things about yoga is there's no need to buy lots of expensive equipment – a mat and some stretchy, comfortable clothes and you're ready to go. But there are still some super-useful aids that can help transform your practice.

Props were popularised by BKS Iyengar, who encouraged his students to use them to improve and deepen correct alignment in a pose. Most yoga studios now have stacks of blocks, bolsters, bricks and straps piled in a corner or tucked away in cupboards. If you're focusing on home practice or want to take your own kit to class, you could invest in a couple of items. Here's how to find the most beneficial props for you.

BLOCK

Often used as an extension of your hands in standing poses, blocks help your spine stay in correct alignment in a pose when you can't reach the floor, such as in Triangle (p62). So they are an indispensable tool for beginners, or if you have an injury or physical limitation. They are also used as supports for your back, head and hips in lying poses and for sitting on to raise your hips and achieve a straighter spine. Available in foam, wood or cork, consider buying two, so you can stack them when needed, have one in each hand or under both knees or hips.

Yogamatters Yoga Block is made from lightweight foam, comes in a rainbow of colours and is durable and comfortable to grip. £4.40, yogamatters.com.





BRICK

Thicker than a block, at 22cm x 11cm x 7cm, bricks are used in the same way as blocks but can offer more lift and height in standing and balancing poses, so are helpful if you're a beginner, or are trying a new challenging pose. A brick can also be placed between your knees to activate your outer leg muscles.

Yogamatters Yoga Brick is made from high-density foam. £6.50, yogamatters.com.

BOLSTER

There's nothing quite like the feeling of opening up your chest in a backbend when resting on a firm bolster – you feel deeply supported, relaxed and free of restraints. Round or rectangular bolsters offer cushioned but substantial support for restorative, yin or Iyengar yoga. Try placing your chest and forehead on a bolster in Sitting forward fold (p75).

Yogamatters Buckwheat Bolster has a removable cotton cover and is filled with sturdy buckwheat hulls, helping it mould to your body shape every time you move into a pose. £36, yogamatters.com.

SOFT AND FIRM BLANKETS

A firm blanket comes into its own for Shoulder stand (p85). Folded and placed under your shoulders, it protects the cervical spine from compression during the inversion. A firm blanket can also be folded and sat on to straighten your spine, or rolled and used in place of a bolster for support in lying or sitting postures, such as backbends. Soft, warm blankets are perfect for keeping you warm in Relaxation pose (p87) at the end of your practice, or during meditation.

Soft and cosy, this lightweight Yogamatters Fleece Yoga Blanket is the ideal cover-up for relaxation. A firmer blanket for sitting on, folding and rolling is the Yogamatters Cotton Yoga Blanket. Both £20, yogamatters.com.

STRAP

Yoga straps are a great investment as a versatile, useful tool to help you ease into many different postures while maintaining correct alignment, including twists and binds, whether you're a beginner or more experienced. A popular prop, this lightweight strap lengthens the reach of your arms, allowing you to keep your spine in alignment and maintain good form. Use it in Seated forward fold (p75), looped around the balls of your feet if you can't quite reach your toes.

The sturdy Yogamatters D-ring Yoga Belt has a metal buckle, is made from natural cotton and comes in a wide range of colours. £5.75, yogamatters.com.



SANDBAG

As well as being soothing when placed on your body, sandbags are also used to add weight to encourage deeper opening in a pose. Studies in hospital settings have shown weighted touch, such as heavy blankets, offers therapeutic effects, mimicking a firm hug or swaddling. The weight helps your body relax and let go of resistance, feel more secure and grounded, and encourages the production of serotonin – the body's feel-good hormone. Try placing a sandbag on your back in Child's pose (p78), or ask a friend to place a sandbag on your feet in Legs up the wall (p112).

This Yogamatters Sandbag is cotton, weighs 5kg, has a zip to adjust the quantity of filling and comes in two sizes – 34cm x 24cm and 42cm x 18cm. £12.50, yogamatters.com.



EYE PILLOW

Perfect for use in Savasana or Relaxation pose (p87) at the end of your practice, these little pillows place a gentle pressure on your eyes that helps to release tension in your face, neck and shoulders, block out intrusive light and send a signal to your brain to relax completely. They're also great for a daytime cat nap!

Yogamatters Deluxe Scented Eye Pillow is beautifully embroidered, filled with linseed and has a subtle lavender fragrance. £9.50, yogamatters.com.



What To WEAR

We're spoilt for choice when it comes to beautiful, comfortable yoga clothing. But you don't need a fashionista's eye – you're wearing the right clothes if they feel so comfortable you can forget about them during your practice

BRAS

Stray straps, itchy lace and underwiring can be uncomfortable and irritating, while metallic clasps can dig in when lying on your back on the mat. Go for soft and stretchy crop tops or low-impact sports bras designed for yoga or Pilates. For those with a larger bust, a super-supportive crop top with wide straps that covers your whole bust well, even when you're in a head stand, is a vital investment.

From Yoga Bra (1) is a classic shape with the minimum of seams and is made from super-soft organic cotton, £29, [yoga matters.com](http://yogamatters.com).

PANTS

Stretchy, close-fitting leggings or Capri pants are the ideal yoga bottoms for ease of movement. Foldable waists are great for extra comfort and warmth too. Avoid drawstrings at the waist as they'll be uncomfortable when lying on your stomach, while overly loose pants can slide about and get in the way, or may even trip you up as you move through a sequence.

Asquith Om Leggings in Rio Pink (2) are bright and energising, with fun satsuma-coloured stitching and a fold-over waist that holds you in. Made from bamboo and organic cotton. £49, yogamatters.com.

A flattering, relaxed fit in soft bamboo jersey, these 7/8-length Asquith Heavenly Harem Pants (3) have deep elasticated cuffs that will stay in place. They've got handy pockets too. £62, yogamatters.com.



TOPS

The last thing you want is to be tugging at your shirt when trying to ease gracefully into Downward dog. Stretchy, shape-hugging, longer tops are a good choice as they'll keep your tummy covered and not fall in front of your face during inversions. If you're worried about wearing something tight, a baggier t-shirt with a hugging, wide waistband around the low hips works well. Avoid collars that can get in the way in lying postures, and necklines that are too loose, as they can fall in front of your face. Soft and lightweight organic cotton is a great fabric choice, but also look for pong-resistant bamboo and high-tech sweat-wicking fabrics, especially if you go to hot yoga classes.

Or layering is a good idea; wear a sweatshirt or zip-up top that you can shed after your warm-up and put back on during relaxation or meditation.

A slightly A-line shape, this flattering organic cotton top finishes on the hips and has a slimming vertical pleat. From Raw Edge Vest (4), £39, yogamatters.com.

Made from soft bamboo, Asquith Smooth You Tee (5) is a looser fit with a wide hip-length waistband. It could easily go from Saturday morning yoga class to brunch with friends. £52, yogamatters.com.

YOUR ESSENTIAL *mat*

Some would say a mat is the only totally necessary yoga accessory. Not only does it define your personal space in a crowded yoga class, your mat offers a psychological sanctuary and a physical home for your yoga journey. Stepping onto your mat becomes a signal to your body and mind to let go of the day's preoccupations and focus on your practice. On a practical level, the sticky, cushioned surface provides traction and stops your feet from slipping out from under you, and prevents discomfort from lying and kneeling on hard floors.

While many of us wouldn't dream of practising without one, today's highly engineered, grippy, colourful or patterned mats have also become fashion statements and are a far cry from the packed earth floors traditionally used by yogis. In fact, some yogis advocate getting back to basics and not using a modern mat, trying a blanket or rug, or heading outside to practise with your bare feet on soft grass or digging your toes into sand at the beach, which can feel grounding and wonderful. Others argue that using sticky mats has benefited the outcome of yoga practice, from building strength in the body to building flexibility – when you no longer have to grip the earth and struggle to stabilise your lower body without slipping, you can focus instead on stretching further into a pose.

THE EVERYDAY CHOICE

This Yogamatters Sticky Yoga Mat (1) will wear in to develop good grip and help you feel secure and stay slip-free in Downward dog. At a standard size – 183cm by 61cm and 4.5mm thick – it's a good value beginners' choice and there are 15 colours to choose from. £17, yogamatters.com.

ON THE MOVE

Most mats are too bulky and heavy to slip into your carry-on luggage. Manduka's Eko Superlite Travel Mat (4) weighs just 0.9kg and is 1.5mm thick so it will fold easily into your suitcase. It's super grippy and made from biodegradable non-Amazon-harvested tree rubber. £35, yogamatters.com.

GO PRO

When it's time to get serious, invest in a mat that could be a lifelong companion. The Manduka Pro Mat (2) is a favourite with yoga teachers and now comes with a lifetime guarantee. At 6mm thick, it's super cushioned and dense, has a non-slip fabric-like finish, is latex-free and comes in two lengths, standard (180cm) or long (216cm). £67.50, yogamatters.com.

A TOUCH OF LUXURY

If you're a devotee of yin yoga – where you hold sitting or lying asanas for longer periods of time – you'll covet these gorgeous, soft fleece mats by Holistic Silk (3). With a non-slip faux leather underside and in a range of beautiful colours, they're also scented with relaxing lavender, releasing wafts of fragrance as you practise. £175, holisticsilk.com.

RUGGED UP

The lovely cotton dhurrie rugs are traditionally used for yoga practice in India. Roll it out over your sticky mat for comfort during relaxation poses and meditation practice. Yogamatters India Cotton Yoga Rug (5), £20, yogamatters.com.

CARRY ALL

This light, 100-per-cent-cotton zip-up yoga mat bag (6) has a pocket for keeping your valuables and an adjustable strap for slinging over your shoulder. It comes in a range of beautiful bright colours. £12, yogamatters.com.



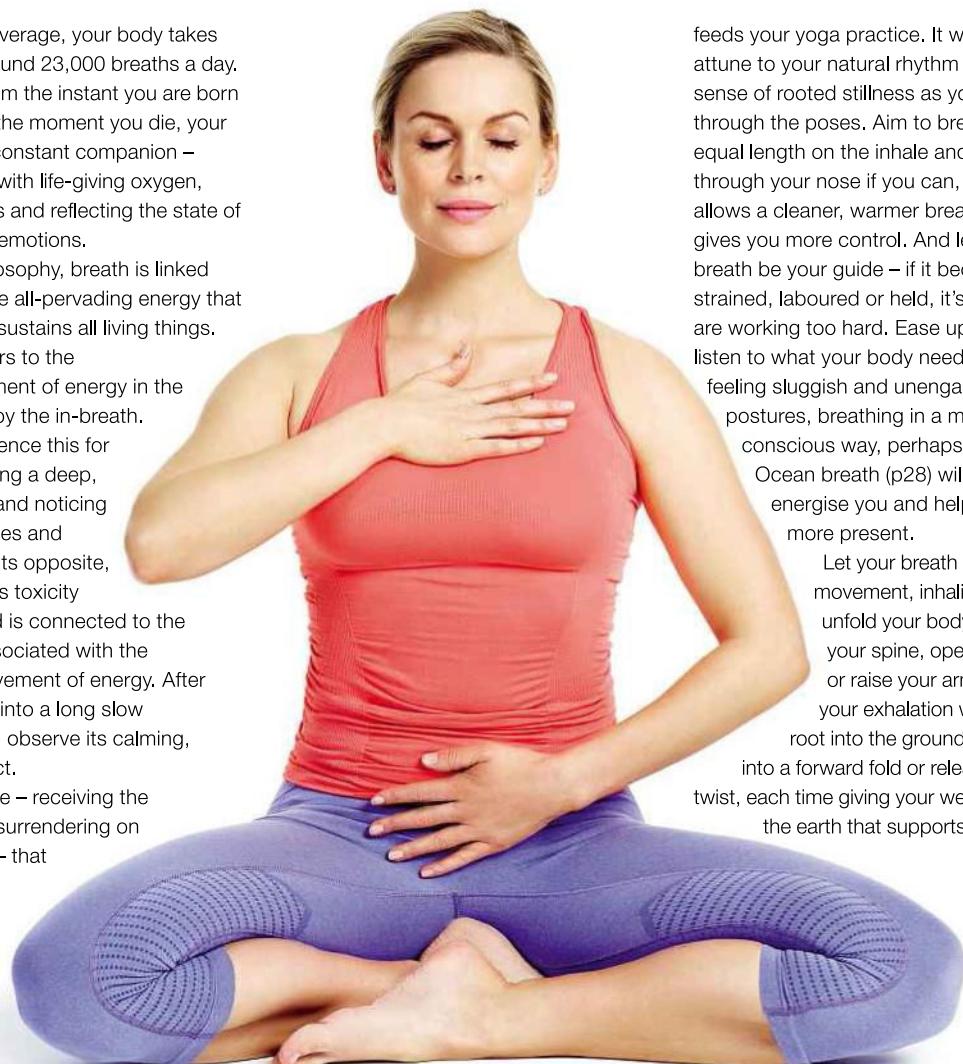
Control YOUR BREATH

Soothe your nervous system, still your mind and energise your entire body with these powerful pranayama exercises

On average, your body takes around 23,000 breaths a day. From the instant you are born to the moment you die, your breath is your constant companion – providing cells with life-giving oxygen, removing toxins and reflecting the state of your mind and emotions.

In yogic philosophy, breath is linked with prana – the all-pervading energy that nourishes and sustains all living things. Prana also refers to the upward-movement of energy in the body, created by the in-breath. You can experience this for yourself by taking a deep, rich inhalation and noticing how it invigorates and refreshes you. Its opposite, apna, removes toxicity and waste, and is connected to the out-breath, associated with the downward movement of energy. After inhaling, let go into a long slow exhalation, and observe its calming, grounding effect.

It's this dance – receiving the inhalation and surrendering on the exhalation – that



feeds your yoga practice. It will help you attune to your natural rhythm and bring a sense of rooted stillness as you work through the poses. Aim to breathe for an equal length on the inhale and exhale, through your nose if you can, as this allows a cleaner, warmer breath, and gives you more control. And let your breath be your guide – if it becomes strained, laboured or held, it's likely you are working too hard. Ease up a bit and listen to what your body needs. If you are feeling sluggish and unengaged with the postures, breathing in a more conscious way, perhaps using Ocean breath (p28) will soon energise you and help you feel more present.

Let your breath instigate movement, inhaling as you unfold your body, lengthen your spine, open your chest or raise your arms. Follow your exhalation when you root into the ground, deepen into a forward fold or release into a twist, each time giving your weight back to the earth that supports you.

OBSERVE THE BREATH

Becoming aware of your breathing habits can lead to a more balanced emotional life. For one week, keep a breathing journal, checking in three times a day to observe how you are breathing in that moment. Is it shallow or rapid? Are you breathing only from your chest? Maybe you'll discover you've even been holding your breath.

After a few days, you may see some patterns begin to emerge. Notice if you repeatedly pause your breath around a particular person or task. What situations leave you taking shallow breaths? When do you take deep, easeful breaths, and how does that make you feel?

As you understand about your individual breathing patterns, see if you can intervene before they become established. Take a few slow, deep breaths when you meet that 'challenging' person. Breathe deeply into your abdomen before you write your to-do list, and notice if it changes what you want to make a priority.

ABDOMINAL BREATHING

- Lying in Relaxation pose (p87), gently close your eyes and take a moment to let go of the day and arrive in your body.

- Take a deep breath in through your nose, then exhale through your mouth, letting go of any tension on your out-breath. Do this twice more, releasing any thoughts as you do so. Make any minor adjustments you need to feel comfortable, then let your breath settle, your heartbeat quieten and your mind gradually become still.

- Bring your attention to your breath and, without trying to change anything, become aware of your natural breathing pattern as it is now. Is it fast or slow? Shallow or deep? Do you take a full in-breath and completely empty your lungs when you breathe out? Remember, there's nothing to change, just observe how you are breathing in this moment.

- Become aware of any movements in your body as you breathe. Can you feel your chest lifting or your belly expanding? Maybe you notice your back presses slightly into the mat as you inhale. Start to become conscious of the micro-movements in your body as you breathe in and out.

- Take your hands and place them on your lower belly, beneath your navel, with your fingertips touching and the heels of your hands resting on your hips (pictured). Allow your belly to soften, and see if you can notice it rising as you inhale and gently falling as you exhale.

- Gently slide your hands to your side ribs, thumbs beneath your back, fingers wrapped round your front ribs. As you breathe, notice if you can sense any movement beneath your hands. If you're finding it hard to feel anything, very gently draw your abdomen towards your spine. Continue for a few breaths, following your natural rhythm, and tuning in to the movement of your ribs as they respond to the action of your diaphragm.

- Finally, slide your right hand back to your lower belly and your left hand up to your chest, to rest over your breastbone. Notice how your hands move as you take a few slow, deep breaths. Maybe they both move, maybe just one moves.

Now, begin to direct your breath, first filling your abdomen, then your ribs and finally your upper chest, as if you were filling a vase with water – first the base, then the middle and lastly the neck. As you exhale, reverse the process, emptying from the chest, then the ribs and lastly the belly.

Like the vase, your diaphragm and lungs are three-dimensional, so allow your breath to travel to the back and sides of your body as well as the front.

Continue in your own rhythm for a few breaths, then gently let your breathing return to normal.

'Feelings come and go like clouds on a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor'

Thich Nhat Hanh





OCEAN BREATH UJJAYI BREATHING

Also known as Victorious breath, ujjayi breathing soothes and tones the nervous system, and energises every cell in your body.

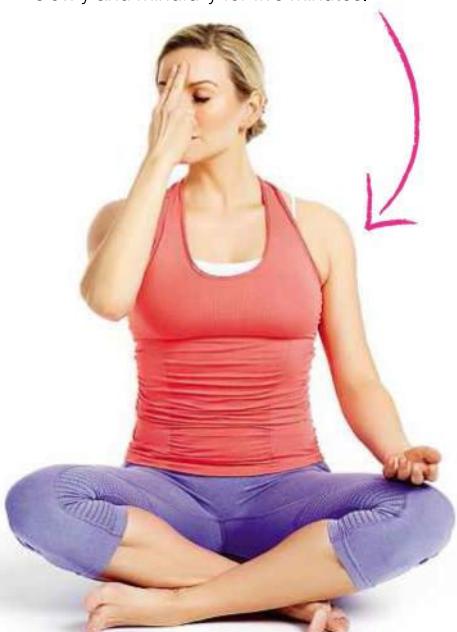
- Lie in Mountain brook pose (p117), and take a few moments to allow your breathing to settle.
- Gently close your eyes and gradually deepen your breathing, inhaling to a count of three and exhaling to a count of six, allowing the pause period between breaths to naturally lengthen. Consciously release any tension as you exhale, letting your body melt deeper into the mat with every breath.
- Let your breathing return to normal then, in your mind's eye, as you inhale, imagine a fine golden thread of light streaming down from the sky to enter the front of your throat. Sense it travel to the back of your throat, then, as you exhale, feel the light move from the back of your throat to the front and return up to the sky.
- Continue attuning to this golden ray of light with each breath, focusing on it entering and leaving your throat. Allow your breath to be gentle and to naturally slow down. Be here for a few minutes, allowing a softness and stillness to settle around you.

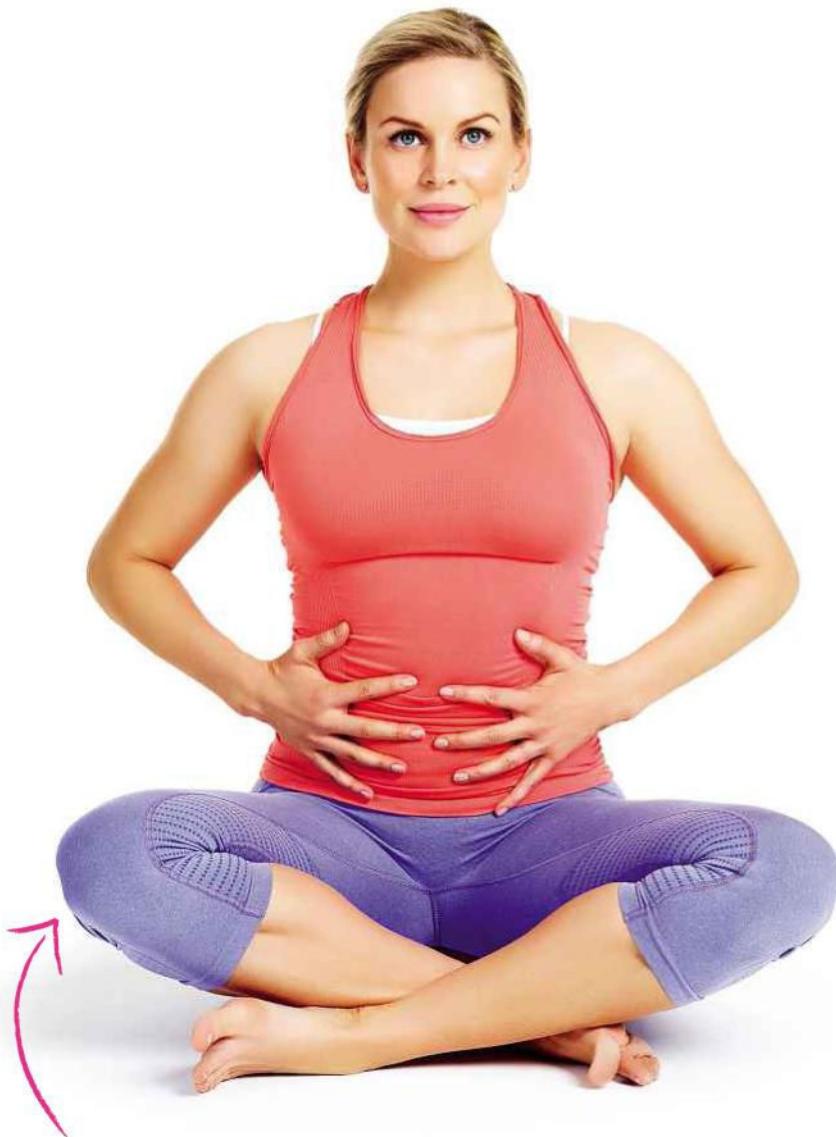
- Gently release this contact, then slowly and mindfully come up to a comfortable seated position, sitting on a block or bolster if your back rounds.
- Allow your breath to settle once more, then continue to imagine you are drawing golden light into your throat, this time from the horizon rather than the sky. Once you sense a quietness enveloping you, continue for a few more rounds, then softly let go and let your breath return to its normal rhythm.
- Maintaining the sense of softness you have found, gently open your lips and this time breathe in and out through your mouth, making a soft 'haaa' sound as you do so. This action slightly closes your throat, and is the central physiological action of Ocean breath. Aim to keep the quality of your breathing very gentle, so the sound would only be audible to someone sitting very close to you. Continue in this way for a few minutes then gently let it go, and softly open your eyes.
- In your yoga practice, you may find yourself naturally moving into Ocean breath without thinking about it. This is quite beautiful when it happens; just trust that your body knows what it's doing, and is supporting your practice in the way you need.

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING NADI SHODHANA

In yogic philosophy, a nadi is an energy channel, and shodhana means to cleanse. This practice calms the nerves, stills the mind and balances the left and right sides of the body.

- Sit in a comfortable position and take a moment to centre yourself. Bring your right hand to your nose, and rest the tip of your thumb on the fleshy part of your right nostril and the tips of your index and middle fingers between your eyebrows. Curl your ring and little fingers under, and rest the inside of your ring finger on your left nostril.
- Close your left nostril with your ring finger and exhale fully through your right nostril. Keeping your left nostril closed, inhale fully and slowly through the right nostril. Close your right nostril with your thumb, then release your ring finger to open your left nostril and exhale slowly.
- Pause, then slowly inhale through the left nostril. Close off the nostril with the ring finger. Pause, release the right nostril with your thumb, then exhale slowly and steadily through the right nostril.
- This is one round. Repeat, breathing slowly and mindfully for five minutes.





BELLOWS BREATH

KAPALABHATI BREATHING

Also known as the Cleansing breath, this breathing exercise energises your whole body very quickly. Do not practise it if you are pregnant, menstruating or after eating.

- Sit in a comfortable position and connect to your breathing for a few moments to centre yourself.
- When you are ready, place your hands on your belly and draw your navel in and up as you quickly exhale through the

nose. Rather than consciously breathing in, allow inhalation to happen naturally.

- Repeat this pattern four to eight times, noticing your belly move in and out like a bellows beneath your hands, and ending with an out-breath. This is one cycle.
- Do another three or four cycles, gradually increasing the speed of your breath, so each exhalation lasts around one second. Take a few, deep Ocean breaths (p28) after each cycle to rest your lungs and diaphragm.
- As you become more experienced, you can build up to 15–30 breaths per cycle.



GROUNDING BREATH

Yogis believe that energy follows thought. I learnt this delightful practice from Alexander Filmer-Lorch. It teaches you to build up a connection with your lower body and the ground beneath you, increasing your sense of security.

- Sit in a comfortable position and, once you're centred, place your hands palm-down on your thighs. Align your spine so your shoulders are directly above your hips and allow your weight to sink down through your sitting bones.
- Gently close your eyes and bring your attention to the tip of your nose. On a long, slow inhalation, travel with your mind's eye to a point 12 fingers' width above the crown of your head.
- Pause, then, on a long, slow exhalation, imagine you're travelling back to the crown of your head and down through the centre of your body to your tailbone. Once there, have a sense of your out-breath, attention and energy dispersing beneath you into the ground.
- Pause, bring your attention back to your nose, and repeat the cycle for five to 10 minutes, travelling up to the 12-finger point on an inhale, down to the floor on an exhale. Keep your breathing very soft, and allow a stillness and peace to settle in and around you.
- When you have finished, open your eyes and pause for a moment or two, to absorb the effects of the practice.

Solid GROUND

Whether you want to hold a pose or build your resilience, it's all about having strong foundations

In the same way that a building gains its strength from its foundations, your yoga postures will be more steady, balanced and open if they have a solid base. In yoga, this is created by paying close attention to the part of your body that's touching the mat and by building a stronger energetic connection to the earth.

In Downward dog (p58), for example, your foundation is your hands and feet and in Staff pose (p72), it's your buttocks, the backs of your legs and your heels. By increasing the surface area of the part of your body in contact with the ground – for example, spreading your fingers and toes – and by consciously rooting into the ground, you're able to create a more secure base.

SECURE BASE

As an experiment, stand in Mountain pose (p50), lift your toes, spread them wide then gently release them back onto the floor. Take a moment to explore what this feels like. Can you sense each toe on the mat? Are you scrunching your toes or gripping the floor? Notice if you can allow an even contact through the length of each toe and toe pad. Now bring your attention to your big and little toes. See if you can ground them into the mat while lifting your three central toes, then

maintain the action of the big and little toes as you release the middle ones back to the floor. Rooting down in this way has a stabilising effect on your legs, rather like guy ropes securing a tent. Finally, move your attention to your ankles and draw them slightly away from each other to lift your inner arches.

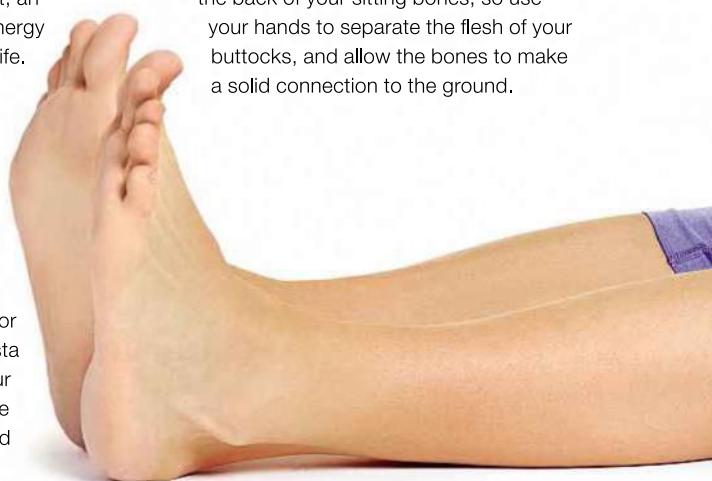
ENERGY EXCHANGE

Whenever you're in a standing pose or balance, using these techniques will substantially change your experience of the pose. Over time, you may begin to sense an exchange of energy, where rooting down into the earth gives strength and solidity, and simultaneously creates a rebound effect, an upward movement of energy that brings the pose to life.

This combination of adjustments is called as pada bandha in Sanskrit, or foot lock. The principle is similar for your hands, where it is known as hasta bandha – hand lock. So, in Downward dog, for example, to engage hasta bandha, you spread your fingers wide and root the base of your thumbs and

index fingers into the ground. This action slightly rotates your forearms inward, giving a sense of stability, and, if you lengthen and ground your fingers into the mat, creates a suction affect in the palm of your hand, similar to the lift of the inner arches in pada bandha. When you do your practice, explore the difference it makes to your experience of postures when you engage these two locks.

Your foundation is just as important in seated poses. In Staff pose (p72), for example, when you have a balanced foundation your legs can be more active and you can align and lengthen your spine more fully. To create a solid base you need to sit on the centre, rather than the back of your sitting bones, so use your hands to separate the flesh of your buttocks, and allow the bones to make a solid connection to the ground.



*'As breath stills
our mind, our
energies are free
to unhook from
the senses and
bend inward'*

BKS Iyengar



Find your CENTRE

Your spine is the backbone of your yoga practice and a strong and healthy spine will enable you to cope with a busy lifestyle

When your spine is strong you are strong. The central axis of your body, it provides stability, absorbs shock, permits flexibility and protects your nervous system. When it's in a healthy alignment, your shoulders can release down your back, opening your chest and freeing your neck, leaving you ready to face whatever the day may bring. This intimate relationship between your spine and personal power has even permeated our use of language. If someone lacks courage or willpower they are called spineless, the essential element of an idea, organisation or social structure is often referred to as its backbone.

Yoga can enhance the health of your spine in several ways. Maintaining your range of motion with forward bends, back bends, side bends and twists not only keeps your spine flexible, but supports the function of your spinal discs too. These spongy structures protect and separate the vertebrae and help absorb shock but, to do their job properly, they need to be well hydrated. Rhythmically compressing and releasing the discs, as with the repeated spinal flexion and extension of Sun salutes (p42), for example, is an ideal way to ensure your discs are adequately hydrated.

EMOTIONAL SIDE OF YOUR SPINE

But your relationship to your spine goes beyond physical structures and processes. Have ever noticed how, emotionally, the front of your body feels different to the back? In Mountain pose (p50), take a moment to tune in to the front of your body, sensing the skin covering your abdomen, mid and upper chest. Sense the softness of the organs beneath. Become aware of any sensations, changes in temperature, palpitations or movement.

Then let go of this contact and bring your awareness to the back of your torso. Notice the proximity of your shoulder blades, back ribs and sacrum to the skin covering your back. See if you can sense your spine, starting at your neck and travelling down towards your sacrum. When you feel vulnerable or find yourself charging forward into a busy day without being fully prepared, try maintaining a sense of connection to the back of your spine, and notice the difference this makes to your experience.

'The spine elongates through the combined forces of gravity, the breath and our directed intention'

Donna Fahri



THE ROLE OF THE PELVIS

Although we often speak of maintaining a straight back in yoga, your spine is actually composed of four curves, two primary outward curves – at the upper chest and sacrum – and two secondary, inward curves – at your neck and lower back.

Maintaining these curves in a healthy alignment is largely down to the position of your pelvis. If your pelvic bowl is tipped forward you're likely to over arch your lower back, if it's tilted backwards, your lumber region will tend to round excessively, placing strain on other structures in your body.

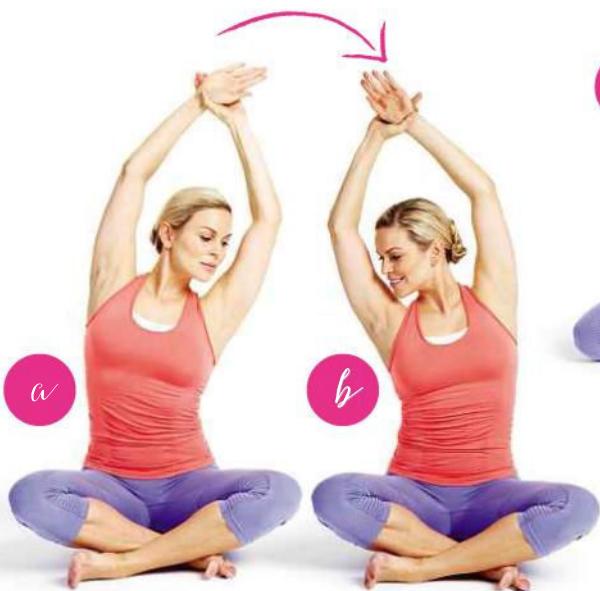
To bring your pelvis into a neutral position stand with your hands on your hips and imagine your pelvis is a large bowl of water. When your pelvis is in neutral, the water is level. If you move your tailbone forward, the water will spill out the back of the bowl. If you tilt your tailbone backwards, the water pours out the front. Experiment with this for a moment and notice how the position of the pelvis affects the alignment of your spine.

There are, however, times when we want to explore different positions of the pelvis to open and expand the spine. In Cat tilt, for example, your tailbone is tucked under, which flattens your lower back and enables you to create space in the back of your spine. By lifting your tailbone to the sky you come into Dog tilt, your lower back curves more deeply and you're able to lengthen your spine more fully.

Whenever you work with your spine in yoga, remember to inhale to lengthen it, creating space between the vertebrae, and exhale to fold forward or twist,

The yoga WARM-UP

Awaken every muscle in your body and get in the frame of mind for deeper practice with this series of gentle asanas



Easy spinal wake-up

From Easy cross-legged pose (p70), inhale and take your arms overhead, fingers interlaced, palms facing the ceiling. Exhale. Take hold of your right wrist with your left hand, inhale and root through your sitting bones, using your left hand to lift your right arm even higher. Feel your spine elongate. As you exhale, draw your right hand over to the left, taking care to keep your body on the same plane, not leaning forward or back (a). Inhale, root down and lengthen a little more, then fold further to the left on an exhale. Take one more deep breath here, then inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side (b). Lower both arms on an exhale.



Shoulder wake-up

From Accomplished pose (p70), inhale and raise your left arm out to the side, shoulder height. Rotate the palm to face the ceiling, then continue raising the arm until your upper arm is close to your ear. As you exhale, fold your forearm to rest your palm on the centre of your upper back, elbow pointing up. Inhale and raise your right arm out to the side, about 45°. Turn your palm to face the back of the room, then bend your elbow and place the back of your hand between your shoulder blades, and take hold of the fingertips of your left hand (a, b). Take three to five deep breaths into your belly, rooting through your sitting bones to keep the spine long and your chest open. Release on an exhale and repeat on the other side.

VARIATION

If your fingertips don't touch, take hold of a strap in your right hand before you move your arm into position. Let it drape down your back, then grasp the strap with your left hand (c). Gradually inch your hands closer together as your shoulder flexibility increases.



Easy twist

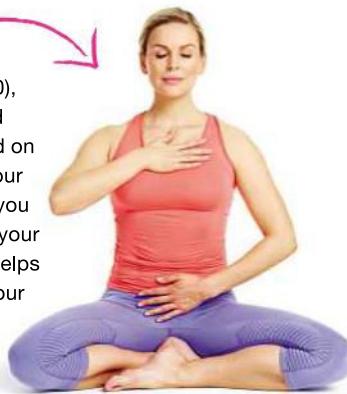
Place your right hand on the floor behind your right buttock, fingers pointing backwards, and rest your left palm on the outside of your right knee. Inhale as you root through your sitting bones to lift your spine out of your pelvis. On an exhale, slowly rotate your spine to the right, moving in a spiral from your waist initially, then the upper body. Inhale, lengthen through the crown of your head, exhale further into the twist.

Draw the kidney area forward and abdomen towards your navel. Inhale one last time, exhale, release further into the twist, turning your head to look over your right shoulder if comfortable for your neck. Inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side.



Thread the needle

From all-fours, with your shoulders over your wrists and hips over your knees, inhale and raise your right arm out to the side. On an exhale, slide your arm beneath your torso, palm facing up, extending your hand under your left arm and out to the side. Take your left hand forward a few inches, then press into the floor to lift your left shoulder and deepen the twist. Exhale to release, then repeat on the other side.



Heart awakener

Taking a few breaths in Accomplished pose (p70), with your hands gently resting on your heart and belly is a simple but powerful practice. The hand on your heart helps you form a soft connect with your compassion, and the hand on your belly draws you in to your centre. With eyes closed, it helps still your mind and quieten your nervous system. It also helps you become more aware of the distribution of your breath between your lower abdomen and your chest. Rest in the pose as long as you need, allowing your breath to naturally lengthen.



Puppy dog

From all-fours, with your shoulders over your wrists and hips over your knees, lie your toes flat on the floor and walk your hands forward a hand's-length or two. Inhale, then exhale and root through your hands as you take your hips back slightly to lengthen your spine. Walk your hands forward a few inches more, if needed, to keep your thighs vertical, then, with your arms remaining active and fingers spread, lower your head to the floor or a folded blanket. Relax your neck and take five deep breaths into your back body. To come out, release into Child's pose (p78) and rest for a moment or two.



Child's pose to Cobra

From a Wide-legged child's pose (p78), inhale and root through your hands to come onto all-fours. Take your feet hip-distance apart, and exhale as you roll down the front of your body, hips leading, to lie on your stomach. With your hands beneath your shoulders, inhale and root into the floor, raising the back of your neck first, to come up into Cobra (p79). On an exhale, slowly lower back to the floor. Inhale, root through your hands and lift your tailbone to come back onto all-fours. Bring the tips of your toes together and exhale back into Child's pose (p78). If feeling tired, you can also come into Cobra this way in Sun salutations (p42), instead of using Caterpillar.

WARM-UP |



Extended child's pose

From Extended child's pose (a) (p78), inhale, then exhale as you raise your head and slowly walk your hands round to your right (b). Lower your head and ground through your hands to draw your left hip back onto your left foot. Breathe into your left side body and feel the expansion of your ribs. Take two more breaths here, then inhale to centre and exhale as you walk your hands to the left and repeat on the other side (c).



Cat/Cow

From all-fours, inhale, then, as you exhale, root through the base of your index fingers and thumbs and the tops of your toes as you release your head and tailbone to the floor and lift your spine towards the ceiling. This is Cat pose (a).

On your next inhale, tilt your tailbone up and release your spine down into a gentle backbend. Draw your shoulders down your back, take your chest forward and up and gently raise your head. This is Cow pose (b).

Continue alternating between Cat and Cow, instigating the movement from your pelvis and following the natural pattern of your breath. Move vertebra by vertebra in a slow and fluid way.



Tiger to gate

From Cow pose, inhale and stretch your right leg back and up, bending your knee and pointing your toes toward your head into Tiger (a).

Pause, then, as you exhale, release

your leg and bring your knee towards your chest as you arc your spine up (b). Moving slowly with your breath, repeat a few times, then, on an inhale, extend your right leg and rest your toes outside your left foot to lengthen and open your right side (c).

Take a few breaths into your right ribs, then raise your right foot, place it out to the side and point your toes, keep your left leg in the same position. Root through your left hand as you raise your right arm alongside your ear and lift into Side gate (d).

Feel the stretch from your right toes all the way to your right fingertips. Take five deep breaths into your right ribs, then exhale to lower and repeat on the other side.





Knees to chest

Lie on your back and, keeping your knees together, draw your knees over your chest. Place your hands just below your knees and hug your legs a little closer. Take 10–20 deep breaths, letting your knees move slightly forward as you inhale, drawing them back in to your chest as you exhale.



Happy baby

Lie on your back and bend your knees, taking them towards your armpits. Flex your ankles, soles facing the ceiling, and take hold of your big toes or the outer edges of your feet. Lengthen the back of your neck and release your shoulders to the floor. Take 10–20 deep breaths.



Eye of the needle

Lie on your back and rest your left ankle on your right thigh. Thread your left hand between your thighs and interlace your fingers behind your right knee (a). If your hands don't reach, wrap a strap around the right thigh (b). Use your arms to draw your right knee towards your chest as you press your left forearm into your left thigh to open the left hip. Take five deep breaths here, then repeat on the other side.

Reclining hand to toe

Lie on your back and hug your right knee in to your chest. Wrap a strap around the ball of your right foot and, on an inhale, straighten your leg. Exhale as you rotate your hip outwards and lower your leg to the side. If necessary, use your left hand to keep your left hip on the floor; otherwise, extend the left arm out to the side. Beginners: if your lower back comes off the floor, bend your left knee and place your foot flat on the floor. Take five deep breaths, inhale to bring your leg back to centre and exhale to gently lower. Repeat on the other side.



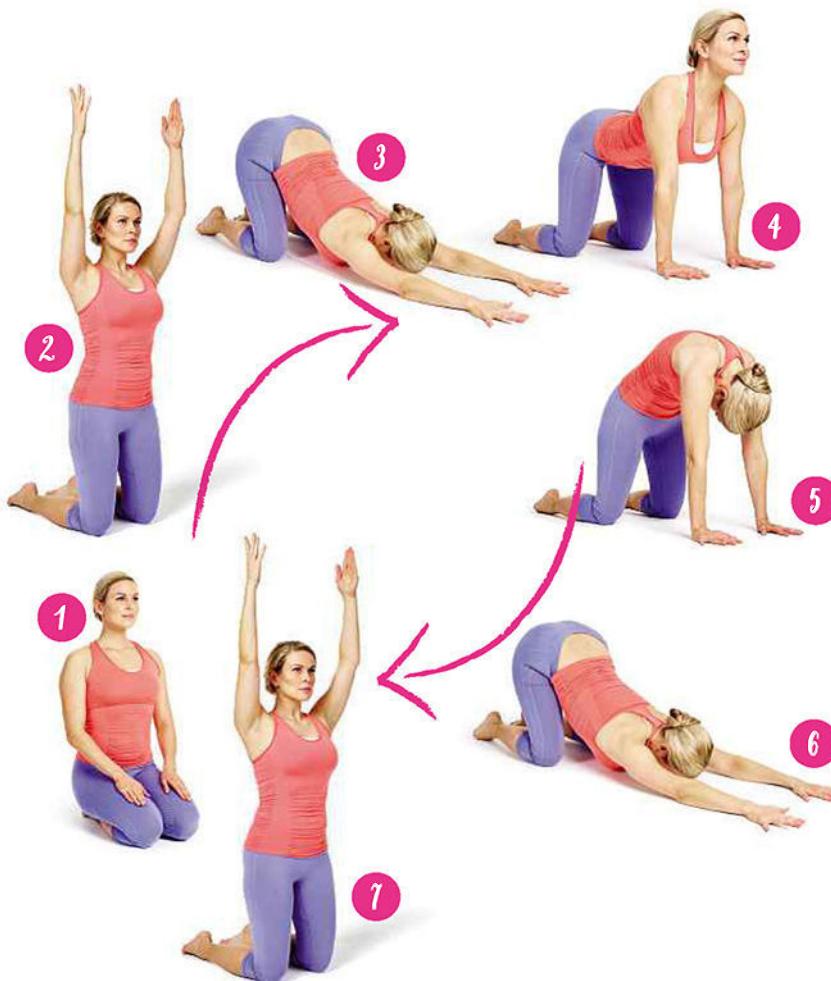
Reclining twist

Lie on your back and hug your right knee in to your chest. Take your right arm out to the side, palm down, and rest your left hand on your right knee. On an exhale, guide your raised knee over to the left and gently turn your head to look to the right. Enjoy the stretch for five deep breaths, then inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side.



Cat FLOW

This sequence is like a mini Sun salute. For beginners, it's a gentle alternative to a full Sun salute (p42), or you can use it to stretch your body when your energy levels are low. Synchronise your movement with your breath, moving slowly and mindfully so you become more sensitive to the subtle nuances you experience.



1 Hero (p71)

Sit on your heels and take a moment to become soft and still. Relax your shoulders, lift through the crown of your head and gently close your eyes. Take three deep breaths.

2 Extended hero (p71)

Inhale and kneel up as you take your arms forward and overhead, palms facing each other. Draw your navel to your spine, lift out of the pelvis and reach through to your fingertips. Slide your shoulder blades down your spine and open your chest.

3 Extended child's pose (p78)

Exhale as you fold forward from the hips. Reach forward with your arms, hands shoulder-width apart, fingers spread and arms drawing back into the arm sockets. On a long slow inhale, root into your hands, lower your elbows to the floor and slide your nose forward, almost touching the mat, towards your hands.

4 Cow pose (p36)

Still inhaling, ground through your hands to lift up into Cow pose. Your tailbone tilts to the ceiling, back arches, shoulder blades melt into the spine and crown lifts.

5 Cat pose (p36)

Instigating the movement from your pelvis, exhale as you root firmly through the hands and knees, to slowly release the tailbone to the floor and your nose to your navel. Let your spine undulate upward, vertebra by vertebra, into an arc.

6 Extended child's pose

Pause your breath as you sit back on your heels into Extended child's pose.

7 Extended hero

Inhale, slide your hands back to either side of your hips, then root through your knees and feet to lift up into Extended hero. Exhale as you softly sit back onto your heels, moving into Hero again, taking your palms to your thighs.

Repeat the cycle three to five times.



Gratitude FLOW

I learnt this sequence from Mimi Kuo-Deemer, co-founder of Beijing yoga studio Yoga Yard. Mimi has a beautiful way of introducing qi gong moves into her flowing yoga classes that is perfectly expressed in this sequence. And, by bringing a sense of appreciation to your practice, it will help you tune in to a quiet source of strength.

1 High lunge (p55)

From Mountain pose (p50), take a large step back with your right leg and balance on the ball of your foot. Square your hips and inhale as you raise your arms forward and overhead. Draw your shoulders down your back and lengthen the back of your neck. Exhale.

2 Prayer twist (p55)

On an inhale, root through your feet to lift your torso out of your pelvis, then bring your hands together in prayer position as you lengthen your spine forward and exhale into a twist to your right, taking your left elbow outside your right knee.

3 High lunge

Inhale back to High lunge.

4 Arms forward

Exhale to take your arms forward. Ground through your feet to lengthen your spine, extending all the way through to your fingertips.

5 Transition

Breathing freely, fold forward and swivel on your feet to face the opposite direction. At the same time, soften your arms and imagine you are carrying something precious with you as you travel from one side to the other.

6 High lunge

Inhale into High lunge in the opposite

direction, with your right leg straight. Exhale.

7 Prayer twist

On an inhale, root through your feet to lengthen your spine, then bring your hands together in prayer and exhale as you twist to your left, right elbow outside your left knee.

8 High lunge

Inhale to raise your arms overhead, then repeat the cycle to return to face the original direction. This is one round.

Do three rounds, then, on the last lunge, exhale to lower your arms and step your back foot forward to Mountain pose.

Sun & moon SALUTATIONS

Many of you will be familiar with some variation of a Sun salutation. The sequence is a regular feature of hatha yoga classes, and a wonderful way to wake up your body. If you have the opportunity, practise outside to feel even more grounded and expansive.

Unlike Sun salutations, which energise and heat your body, Moon salutes are calming and restorative. They invite you to become more reflective and receptive, so are especially suited to those times when you're feeling stressed or depleted. Practised mindfully, they can soothe an

overactive mind, rebalance your system before exhaustion sets in, and replenish your energy.

Traditionally practised under the moonlight, you can use them whenever you need to slow down and connect to your natural rhythm. For example, to transition between your working day and the evening, before you go to sleep at night or any time you feel under pressure, out of balance or low in energy.

The Moon meditation (p127), immediately before or after the sequence, is a beautiful way to tune in to your softer side.

'It's not so much how you do, but the quality of your being'

Shiva Rea



START



HALF SUN SALUTE

This gentle warm-up prepares your body for a full Sun salute. Let your breath guide your movements, breathing slowly and deeply into your belly. Savour each moment, allowing your body to enjoy the feeling of expansion, followed by a gentle release into softness. When you have even less than 10 minutes to spare, a few rounds of Half sun salute, pausing for two or three breaths in each pose, will help you feel more present in your body and create some mental space in your day.

Poses

1 Mountain pose (p50)

Inhale and take your arms out to the sides and overhead to...

2 Extended mountain pose (p51)

Exhale and take your arms to the sides and down into...

3 Standing forward fold (p52)

Inhale as you reach forward and move into...

4 Half standing forward fold (p52)

Exhale to release into...

5 Standing forward fold

Inhale and take your arms out to the sides and overhead to...

6 Extended mountain pose

Exhale and take your arms to the sides and down into...

7 Mountain pose



SUN SALUTE I

This flowing salute will wake up all the major muscle groups in your body and help you to feel grounded

To keep the sequence calming, work at a slow pace and focus on smooth transitions, so it becomes like a moving meditation. On the first round, take three to five breaths in each pose to refine your alignment and give your body time to acclimatise to the pose. On subsequent rounds, flow freely from one posture to the next, following the pattern below. Synchronise your movement with your breath, breathing into your belly or using Ocean breath (p28).

Poses

1 Mountain pose (p50)

Inhale and take your arms out to the sides and overhead to...

2 Extended mountain pose (p51)

Exhale and take your arms to the sides and down into...

3 Standing forward fold (p52)

Inhale as you step your left leg back to...

4 Crescent (p54)

Exhale and step your right foot back to...

5 Downward dog (p58)

Take five deep breaths here, 'walking the dog' by bending one knee then the other, and focus on lengthening your spine.

6 Caterpillar

Pause the breath as you lower your knees and chest to the floor, and then your abdomen. Then inhale into...

7 Cobra (p79)

Exhale and root through your hands to lift back into...

8 Downward dog

Inhale as you step your right foot forward into...

9 Crescent

Exhale and step your right foot into...

10 Standing forward fold

Inhale, taking your arms out to the side and overhead to...

11 Extended mountain pose

Exhale your arms out to the side and to prayer, back into...

12 Mountain pose

Repeat, leading with your right leg. This forms one round.



1



8



9



MOON SALUTE I

Developed by the Kripalu School of Yoga, this sequence is calming but also mildly energising, so you might like to practise it in the mornings. For the first round, take two or three breaths in each pose, then follow the breathing pattern below. When you become familiar with the sequence, experiment with allowing the poses to flow into each other like one continuous thread – a fluid moon dance. Repeat two to three times.

1 Mountain pose (p50)

Inhale, and take your arms out to the side and overhead, and exhale into...

2 Extended mountain pose with side bend (p51)

Extend to the left, then inhale to centre and exhale to the right. Inhale back up and step sideways with your left foot. Exhale into...

3 Goddess (p69)

Inhale. Turn your left foot out 90°, and your right foot in slightly, and exhale into...

4 Triangle (p62)

Inhale, then exhale as you lower your right hand and turn both hips to the left, pivoting on your back foot, to come into...

5 Pyramid (p64)

Inhale, then exhale as you lower your right knee to the floor. Inhale into...

6 Crescent (p54)

Exhale and lower your hands to the floor and turn to the right into...

7 Half squat (p82)

Inhale into prayer, then lower your hands and exhale into...

8 Garland pose (p81)

Inhale into prayer, then lower your hands and exhale into...

9 Half squat

Inhale into prayer, then exhale as you lower your hands and turn to your right, and inhale into...

10 Crescent

Exhale, lower your hands, then inhale and rise into...

11 Pyramid

Exhale, then inhale, taking your left arm in a large arc into...

12 Triangle

Exhale, then inhale to come up and exhale into...

13 Goddess

Inhale as you step your feet together, exhale hands to prayer. Inhale into...

14 Extended mountain pose with side bend

Exhale to the left, inhale to centre, exhale to the right, inhale back to centre, exhale into...

15 Mountain pose

Pause, then repeat, leading to the right.

START

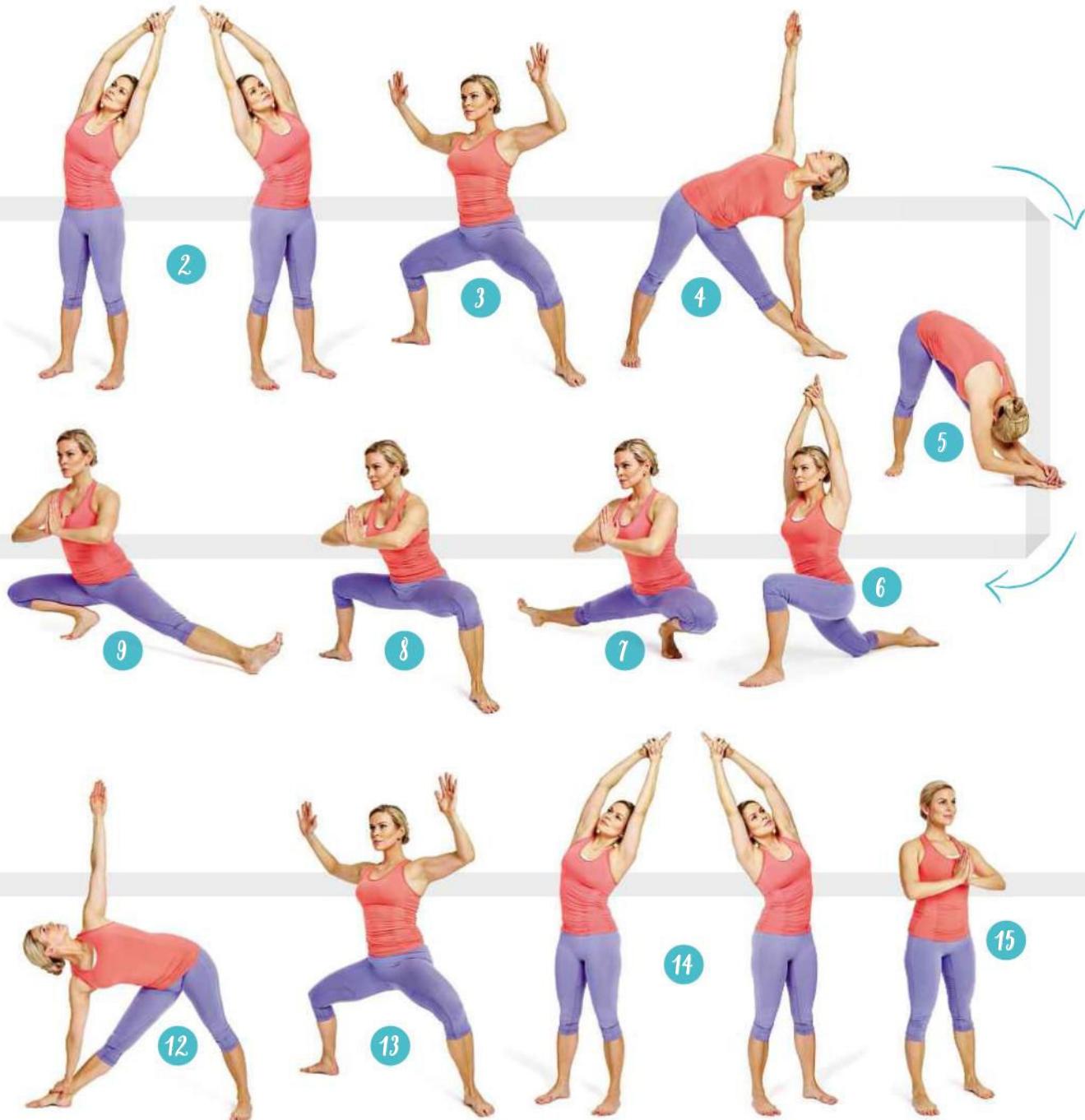
1



10



11



MOON SALUTE II

This intuitive Moon salutation is a beautiful way to unwind in the evening. Based on a sequence by Prana Vinyasa founder Shiva Rea, it invites you to trust the wisdom of your own body, using spontaneous movements to help you find your own version of each pose, moment by moment.

Think of it as a moving meditation. Once you are familiar with the sequence, allow your body and mind to surrender to the flowing movements as you release, soften and cascade from one pose to the next. In each moment, allow yourself to experience your body as it is now. Breathe freely, inhaling as your heart expands, exhaling as you fold forward, or follow the suggestions below.

1 Mountain pose (p50)

Stand in Mountain pose, with your hands softly at your heart, palms facing up and little fingers touching – a gesture of surrender and letting go.

2 Heart-opening pose

Inhale, circle your hands out to the side and, on an exhale, rest them on your sacrum, fingertips pointing down. Inhale, root through your feet and lift through your chest into a gentle backbend.

3 Lunar standing forward fold (p52)

Exhale as you fold from the hips. Keep your knees soft and let your chest drape over your thighs. Rest your hands on the mat, palms up.

Inhale, step your left foot straight back (pausing in Lunge if you wish) then turn your front foot out 90° and swivel onto the outside edge of your back foot.

4 Nectar of the Moon I (p56)

Inhale to bring your right arm alongside your ear. Ground through your left hand to lift and open your chest, keeping your legs active.

5 Nectar of the Moon II (p56)

Exhale as you arc your right arm around towards your back foot.

Move between 4 and 5 three times, then, from 5, pivot on your feet and walk your hands round to your left so you face the long side of the mat.

6-7 Spontaneous flowing half squat (p83)

Move between your left and right feet a few times, then, finishing by your left foot, place your hands either side of your foot and pivot to your left.

8 Downward dog (p58)

Bring your feet hip-distance apart, lift your hips to the ceiling, ground your hands, rooting through the base of your thumbs and index fingers. Exhale into...

9 Puppy dog (p35)

Rest here for a few breaths, then inhale as you come forward to lower onto your stomach. Exhale. Inhale into...

10-12 Spontaneous flowing cobra (p79)

Rise up and down a couple of times, allowing your upper spine and shoulders to move in a fluid spontaneous way, for example. Look to the left, tilting your shoulders and upper body to the left, then to the right. Come up into full Cobra. Lower to the floor on an exhale, rest for a couple of breaths, then inhale and root through your hands to lift into...

13 Bliss-filled downward dog

Move freely as your body needs to for a few breaths, maybe slowly ‘walking the dog’ or circling your hips. Pause, then inhale and raise your right leg into...

14 Downward dog splits (p59)

Exhale to lower your right leg. Inhale and raise your left leg, then exhale as you bring it forward into...

15 Lunar standing forward fold

Inhale and gently uncurl into...

START

1



10



11



12

16 Heart-opening pose

Root through your feet as you lift into your heart and crown. Pause for a moment, imagining you are being bathed in moonlight, then exhale into...

17 Mountain pose

Pause, tune into how you feel now. When you are ready, repeat the sequence on the other side, stepping back with your right leg.



'This practice is beneficial for anyone under stress. It's a great way to balance your energy before you get to the point of exhaustion'

Shiva Rea





The POSES

Deepen your understanding of yoga asanas and take your practice to the next level with these thorough descriptions. You'll discover the body and mind benefits of each asana, while helpful tips give you the knowledge you need to ensure safe practice.

You'll learn the breathing techniques that will help you stay fully focused and present in the moment.

If you want a further challenge, or to be gentle on yourself, variations are given for each pose, allowing you to tailor your practice to your energy levels and needs.

MOUNTAIN POSE

TADASANA

- Place your feet together or up to shoulder-width apart, inner edges parallel. Balance your weight evenly over each foot, perhaps swaying from foot to foot until you sense the central position. Spread your toes and root through the base of your big and little toes. Lift your inner arches by drawing your ankles away from each other.
- Check your kneecaps are in line with your mid-toes, gently lift them and draw your leg muscles towards your bones. Align your pelvis over your feet, relax your buttocks and allow your tail and sitting bones to release to the floor, bringing your pelvis into neutral. Breathe.
- Draw your navel towards your spine, then inhale as you open your chest and, on an exhale, release your shoulders back and down your spine. Let your arms fall naturally to your sides and allow them to extend gently through to your fingertips.
- Lengthen the back of your neck and soften your throat. Let go of any tension in your jaw and let your gaze be soft.
- As you inhale, ground through your feet and feel the corresponding lift in your spine as you lengthen through to the crown of your head. Let your breath be gentle, feeling the length and lightness of each in-breath, a sense of grounding and stability on the out-breath. Become still like a mountain for up to one minute.
- Exhale to release and take a moment to absorb the effects of the pose.

Benefits

- Calming
- Grounding
- Steadies the breath
- Helps develop balance



Mountain pose forms the basis of all the standing postures. Once you experience what it feels like to be grounded in this posture, it will enhance your understanding of the other poses.

Hand variations

PRAYER HANDS

Bring your hands to your heart, elbows down, palms together and fingertips pointing upward. Softly, but actively, press each palm into the other. Release and lengthen the back of your neck.

SALUTATION SEAL

From prayer, gently draw your thumbs away from each other and open your palms towards the ceiling, as if making an offering to the sky.



EXTENDED MOUNTAIN POSE

TADASANA URDHVA HASTASANA

- From Mountain pose (facing page), check your weight is evenly balanced between both feet, your pelvis is in neutral and your chest open. Take a couple of breaths to centre yourself. When you feel ready, continue.
- On a slow, deep inhale, root through your feet as you lift your waist out of your hips to lengthen your spine. At the same time, turn your palms outwards and extend your arms to the sides and overhead (pictured). Interlace your fingers and thumbs, keeping your index fingers extended. Exhale.
- Inhale and ground through your feet as you reach your arms upwards, drawing your shoulders down your spine to create space around your neck.
- On each inhale, root down to lift through your crown, and on each exhale, visualise your breath travelling down your body and through your feet.
- Draw your leg muscles to your bones, your navel to your spine and your lower ribs in slightly.
- Keep your gaze soft and take five deep breaths, releasing your arms as you exhale.

Benefits

- Grounding
- Energising
- Stretches the side body
- Aids deeper breathing



Tip

For a deeper side stretch, grasp hold of your wrist with the opposite hand and use it to gently lengthen your arm and side body. Aim to keep your torso in one plane, not leaning forward or backward.



Variation

Ground through your feet as you inhale and lengthen your spine, then exhale and gently draw your arms over to your left to open your right side body. Allow your right hip to move out to the side, bending your left knee a little if this feels more comfortable. Rest in the pose for three to five breaths, then inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side. Exhale to lower the arms.

STANDING FORWARD FOLD

UTTANASANA

- From Mountain pose (p50), with your feet hip-distance apart, take your hands to your hips and, on an inhale, root through your feet to lengthen your torso away from your pelvis.
- Exhale, bend your knees slightly and fold forward from your hips, keeping your hips in Dog tilt (p33) and your back flat. When your spine is parallel to the floor, let your pelvis come into neutral.
- Keeping your knees bent, inhale to lengthen your spine once more, then, as you exhale, continue folding and allow your chest to rest on your thighs. Release your arms and rest your hands on your shins, ankles or the floor.
- If it feels comfortable, straighten your legs, keeping a microbend in your knees, then allow your upper body to relax fully. Take your tailbone towards the ceiling, and your head closer to the floor.
- On each in-breath, feel your spine lengthening; on each out-breath, fold a little deeper.
- Consciously surrender, breathing softly and evenly for several breaths, then inhale to gently uncurl your spine to return to standing.

Benefits

- Calms the sympathetic nervous system
- Relieves fatigue
- Reduces insomnia
- Regulates blood pressure



Variations

HALF FORWARD FOLD

From Standing forward fold, knees bent or straight, place your hands a few inches in front of your feet. Inhale as you lengthen your crown away from your tailbone to come up to a flat back. Root through your hands and feet and draw your shoulder blades down your spine. Take five deep breaths and release back into Standing forward fold.



LUNAR FORWARD FOLD

This soft forward fold is used in the Moon salutation II (p46). Bend your knees and let your torso drape over your thighs. Release your neck and rest the backs of your hands on the floor. Allow your breath to find its natural rhythm, slowing down as your body surrenders to the ground.



CHAIR

UTKATASANA

- Begin in Standing forward fold (facing page) with your feet up to hip-width apart, toes spread and arches lifted.
- Take a couple of breaths to prepare, then bend your knees deeply, take your arms back, a few inches off the ground, and lift your head to look forward.
- On an inhale, ground through your feet as you sweep your arms up and forward, palms facing, until your upper arms are level with your ears.
- Draw your navel to your spine and release your shoulder blades down your back. Lengthen through your fingertips, while drawing your arms back into your shoulder sockets. Keep your neck in line with your spine.
- On each inhale, root and lengthen through your arms; on each exhale, sink a little deeper, making sure your knees don't extend beyond your toes. Take three to five breaths, feeling the strength of your body.
- To come out, root through your feet as you inhale to reach through your arms and come up to standing. Exhale as you lower your arms.

Benefits

- Strengthens the legs
- Grounding
- Stabilising
- Improves endurance



Tip

You can also come into Chair pose from Mountain pose (p50), reaching up with your arms as you bend your knees. Experiment with both approaches, noticing the different effects on your body, and choose whichever feels right for you in this moment.



CRESCENT MOON

ANJANEYASANA

- From Standing forward fold (p52), inhale and slide your left leg back, lowering your knee to the mat and resting the top of your left foot on the floor. Spread the toes of your right foot, rooting through your big and little toes and lifting your inner arch.

- Inhale as you take your hands to your right thigh and raise your torso to vertical. Tuck your tailbone under and square your hips to give your left hip flexor a good stretch.

- Exhale and sink into your hips, drawing your belly button towards your spine to support your lower back.

Interlace your fingers and thumbs, index finger pointing forward, and inhale as you bring your arms forward and over your head in a slow, sweeping arc.

- On each inhale, root down as you lift your chest and arch a little further into a backbend. Exhale as you reach your arms up and back, releasing your shoulder blades down your back.

- Be in the pose for five to 10 breaths, breathing smoothly into your belly. When you feel ready, exhale and place your hands either side of your front foot. Step forward with your back foot and slowly uncurl your spine to return to standing. Pause for a moment to register the effects of the pose, then repeat on the other side.

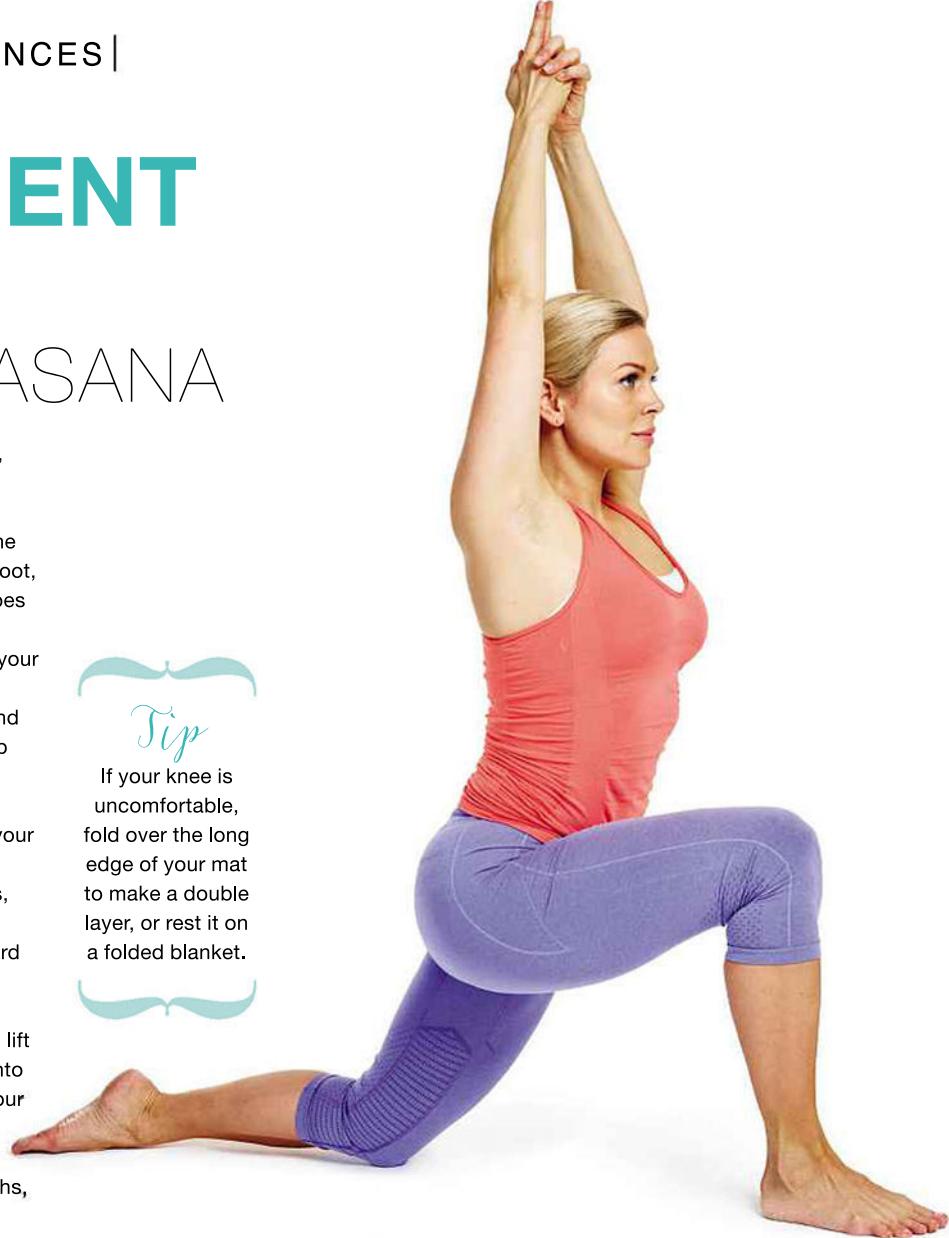
Benefits

- Harmonises the nervous system
- Improves balance
- Strengthens the leg muscles
- Energises without overstimulating



Tip

If your knee is uncomfortable, fold over the long edge of your mat to make a double layer, or rest it on a folded blanket.



Variation

Move into Eagle arms (p68) to open your shoulders as well as your hips. Root through your front foot to aid your balance, and, if it is available to you, gently close your eyes and take a moment to find a sense of stillness.

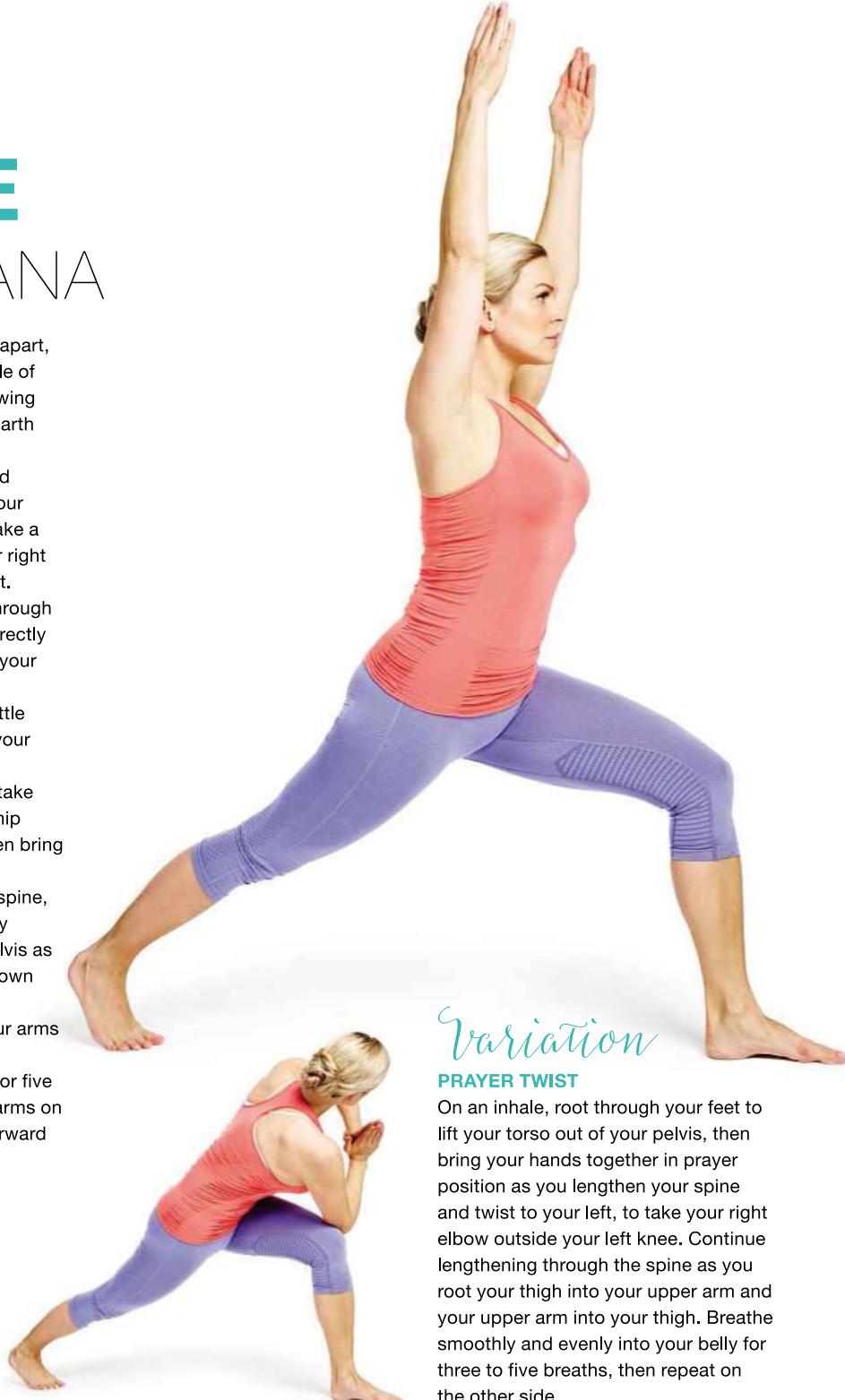
HIGH LUNGE

ALANASANA

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart, inner edges parallel. Take a couple of deep breaths into your belly, allowing your weight to sink towards the earth on the out-breath.
- Fold forward from your hips and place your hands either side of your feet, resting on your fingertips. Take a large step straight back with your right leg, to rest on the ball of your foot. Straighten your leg and extend through the back heel. Your left knee is directly over your left ankle, aligned with your middle toes.
- Ground through your big and little toes, and raise the inner arch of your left foot.
- With your hands on your hips, take your left hip back and your right hip forward to square your pelvis, then bring your thighs towards the mid-line.
- Draw your navel towards your spine, then, on an inhale, simultaneously lengthen your spine out of the pelvis as you draw your shoulder blades down your spine.
- On your next inhale, sweep your arms out to the sides and overhead.
- Breathe evenly into your belly for five deep breaths, then release your arms on an exhale, step your back foot forward and repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Strengthens the legs
- Releases tension in the hips
- Aids balance



Variation

PRAYER TWIST

On an inhale, root through your feet to lift your torso out of your pelvis, then bring your hands together in prayer position as you lengthen your spine and twist to your left; to take your right elbow outside your left knee. Continue lengthening through the spine as you root your thigh into your upper arm and your upper arm into your thigh. Breathe smoothly and evenly into your belly for three to five breaths, then repeat on the other side.

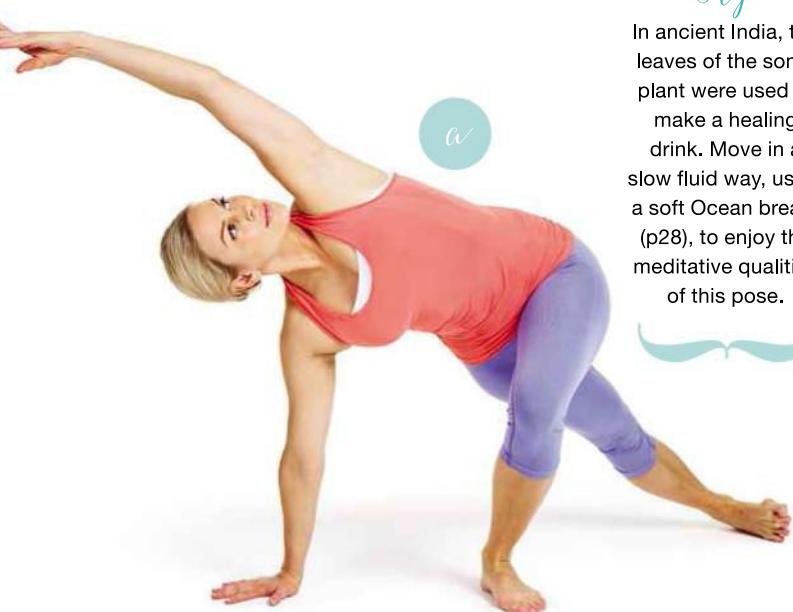
NECTAR OF THE FLOWING MOON

SOMACHANDRASANA

- Close your eyes and take two or three deep breaths into your belly to quieten your mind. Step into a lunge, with your left foot forward and your hands either side of your left foot.
- Inhale, then, on an exhale, take your weight onto your right hand as you pivot clockwise on your front heel, turning your left foot out 90°.
- At the same time, pivot clockwise on your back toes, taking your heel to the right, so you rest on the outer edge of your back foot, sole facing the back of the mat.
- Grounding through your right hand, inhale and arc your left arm forward and alongside your ear. Look up toward your raised hand and, keeping your legs active, use the contact of your right foot on the mat to lift your chest and lengthen the left side of your body, from your foot to your fingertips (a).
- On your next exhale, sweep your left arm alongside your top hip, fingertips pointing toward your back foot. Take your gaze toward your right toes (b).
- Continue moving between these two poses for a few rounds, arcing a little deeper into a backbend on each inhale, softening as your exhale. When you feel ready, exhale to lower, then rest in Child's pose (p78), before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Mildly energising
- Heart opening
- Calming
- Grounding



a



b



In ancient India, the leaves of the soma plant were used to make a healing drink. Move in a slow fluid way, using a soft Ocean breath (p28), to enjoy the meditative qualities of this pose.



WIDE-LEGGED FORWARD FOLD

PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA



Variations

VARIATION 1

When you've been sitting all day, enjoy a deeper chest opener and shoulder release by interlacing your fingers behind your back and, as you inhale, drawing shoulder blades together. On an exhale, raise your hands and allow your arms to cascade over your head.

VARIATION 2

If you would like a more restorative version of this pose, rest your head on a bolster for up to a minute, to refresh mind and body. Breathe softly and deeply, right down into your lower back, feeling the tension melt away. When you're ready to come out, gently press your hands into the mat to take the weight off your head, then inhale to come back up to standing.

VARIATION 3

For a gently dynamic version of Wide-legged forward fold, walk your hands over to your left foot, feeling an intense stretch in your right side body. Take five deep breaths, then walk your hands over to your other foot.

- Take a couple of breaths in Mountain pose (p50) to centre yourself, then step your feet wide, inner edges parallel, toes spread and arches lifted. Anchor the outer edges of your feet into the mat.
- Rest your hands on your hips and, on an inhale, root through your feet to lengthen your spine. As you exhale, fold forward from the hips with a flat back, to take your spine horizontal to the floor.
- Place your hands on the floor beneath your shoulders, then continue lengthening your spine as you inhale, folding deeper as you exhale, allowing the crown of your head to slowly edge closer to the mat.
- Draw up your kneecaps and engage your thighs, turning your inner thighs in

- slightly to open your sitting bones.
- Move your hands between your feet, fingers spread wide and forearms vertical, and let your neck and head release to the floor. Root your hands into the mat to lift your shoulders and create space around your neck.
- Breathe deeply and evenly for five to 10 breaths, then, taking your hands back to your hips, inhale to come back up to standing.

Benefits

- Rests the heart
- Calms and cools the mind
- Removes fatigue
- Increases blood flow to the head

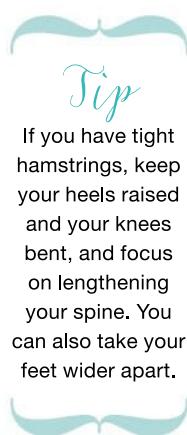
DOWNWARD DOG

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

- Begin on all-fours, with your hands a palm's length in front of your shoulders, shoulder-width apart, fingers spread and wrist creases facing the front of the mat. Have your knees directly beneath your hips and your shins parallel. Tuck under your toes.
- Root through the base of your thumbs and index fingers, then raise your knees off the mat, drawing your tailbone back and up to lengthen your spine.
- Keep your knees bent initially, checking they are in line with your middle toes, and focus on extending your spine by grounding through your hands (imagine you are pushing the floor away from you). Rotate your upper arms externally and draw your shoulder blades down your spine. Lower your front ribs toward your thighs and release your neck.
- Take a couple of breaths here, then bring your attention to your hips. Lift and broaden your sitting bones, checking your hips are in Dog tilt (p33), and gently draw one heel and then the other towards the mat, stretching out your hamstrings in a walking motion.
- Spread your toes and lower both heels. If they reach the ground, check your weight is evenly distributed through each foot and your inner arches lifted.
- Take five long slow breaths in the pose. When you feel ready, exhale, gently lower your knees and sit back in Child's pose (p78).

Benefits

- Tones and relaxes the nervous system
- Relieves extreme fatigue
- Reduces palpitations and breathlessness
- Eases insomnia



Tip

If you have tight hamstrings, keep your heels raised and your knees bent, and focus on lengthening your spine. You can also take your feet wider apart.



Variation

HALF DOG

Stand a leg's distance from a wall and rest your palms against it. Alternatively use a sturdy chair. Walk your hands down the wall until your spine is parallel to the floor. Actively root through your hands, draw your shoulder blades down

your spine and extend your tailbone away from your crown to lengthen your spine. Ground through your feet and take a micro-bend in your knees. Enjoy the sensation of this stretch for five deep abdominal breaths.

DOWNWARD DOG SPLITS

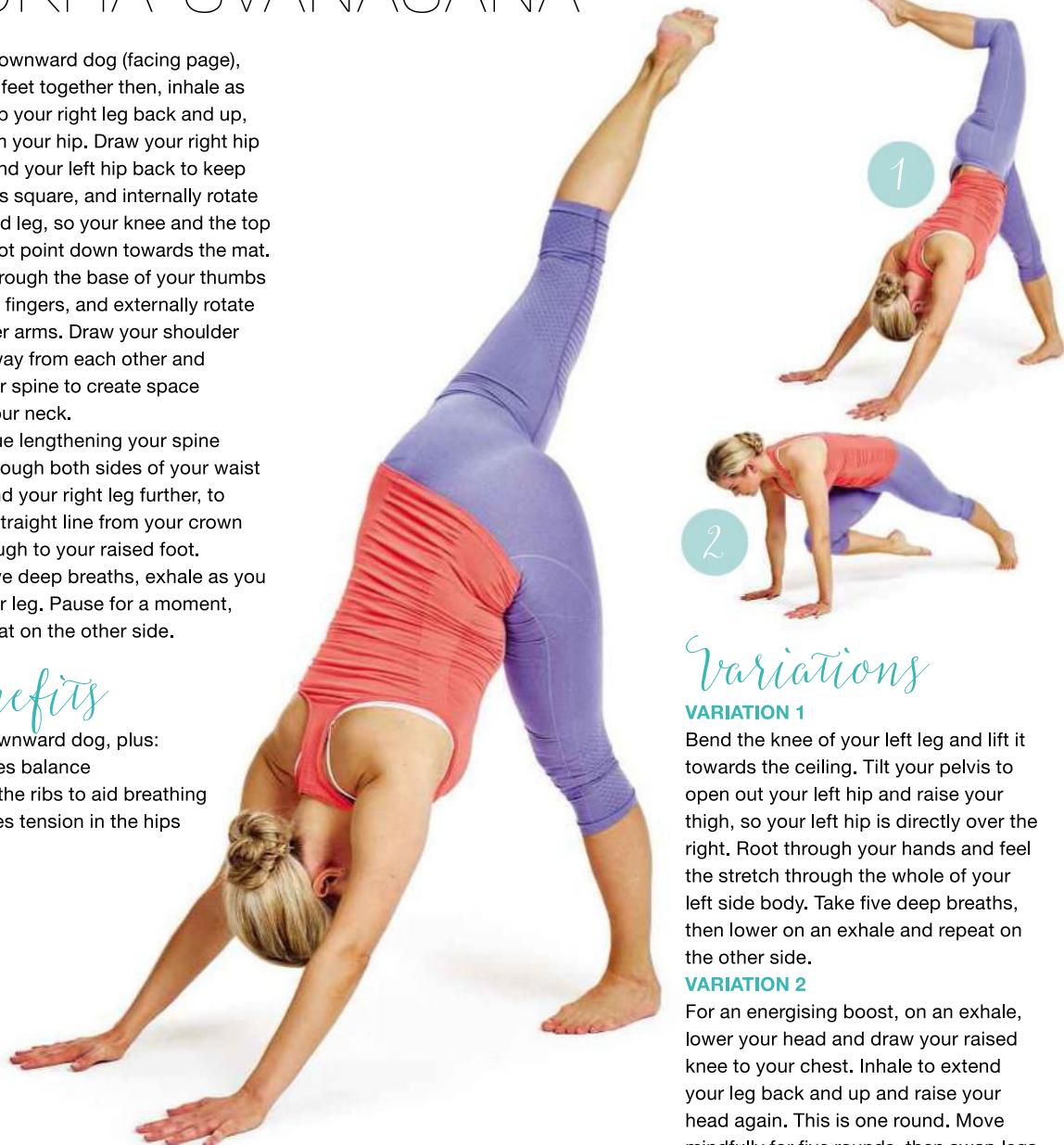
EKA PADA ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

- From Downward dog (facing page), step your feet together then, inhale as you sweep your right leg back and up, lifting from your hip. Draw your right hip forward and your left hip back to keep your pelvis square, and internally rotate your raised leg, so your knee and the top of your foot point down towards the mat.
- Root through the base of your thumbs and index fingers, and externally rotate your upper arms. Draw your shoulder blades away from each other and down your spine to create space around your neck.
- Continue lengthening your spine evenly through both sides of your waist and extend your right leg further, to create a straight line from your crown right through to your raised foot.
- After five deep breaths, exhale as you lower your leg. Pause for a moment, then repeat on the other side.

Benefits

As for Downward dog, plus:

- Improves balance
- Opens the ribs to aid breathing
- Releases tension in the hips



Variations

VARIATION 1

Bend the knee of your left leg and lift it towards the ceiling. Tilt your pelvis to open out your left hip and raise your thigh, so your left hip is directly over the right. Root through your hands and feel the stretch through the whole of your left side body. Take five deep breaths, then lower on an exhale and repeat on the other side.

VARIATION 2

For an energising boost, on an exhale, lower your head and draw your raised knee to your chest. Inhale to extend your leg back and up and raise your head again. This is one round. Move mindfully for five rounds, then swap legs.

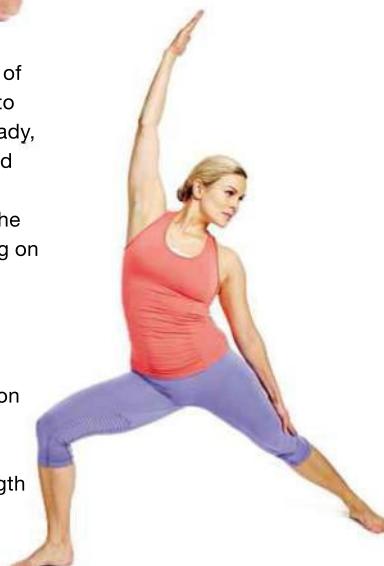
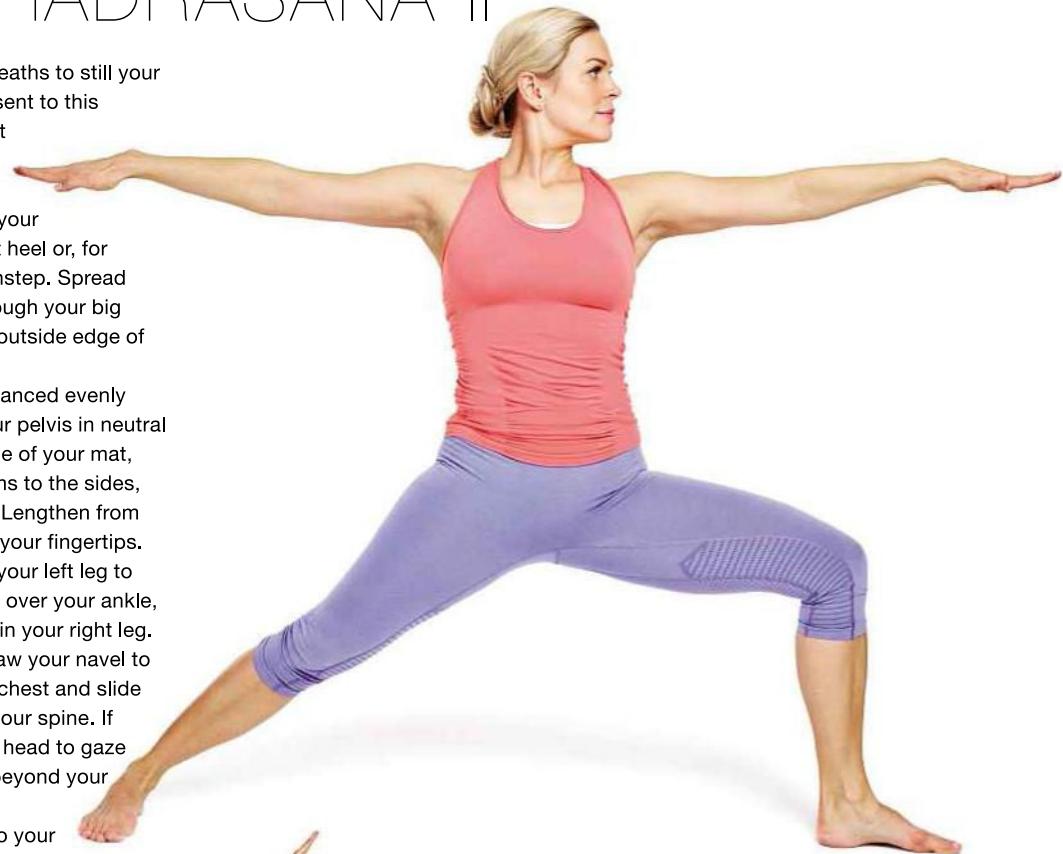
WARRIOR II

VIRABHADRASANA II

- After taking a few breaths to still your mind and become present to this moment, step your feet wide, turning your left foot out 90° and your right foot in 15°. Align your left heel with your right heel or, for beginners, your right instep. Spread your toes and root through your big and little toes and the outside edge of your right foot.
- With your weight balanced evenly between both feet, your pelvis in neutral and facing the long side of your mat, inhale to raise your arms to the sides, palms facing the floor. Lengthen from your centre to beyond your fingertips.
- On an exhale, bend your left leg to take your knee directly over your ankle, keeping a micro-bend in your right leg.
- Breathing evenly, draw your navel to your spine, open your chest and slide your shoulders down your spine. If comfortable, turn your head to gaze along your front arm, beyond your middle finger.
- Take five breaths into your belly, draw your inner thighs together and feel how the strength of your lower body brings a freedom to your upper body. When you feel ready, exhale, gently lower your hands and step your feet together.
- Pause for a moment to register the effects of the pose before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Increases focus and determination
- Strengthens the legs
- Grounding
- Helps you connect to your strength



Variation

REVERSE WARRIOR

From Warrior II, inhale as you slide your back arm down your back thigh, and raise your front arm overhead, gently arching your spine laterally. Root your feet down and lift your torso up on each inhale, feeling the side body open, and, as you exhale, arc a little further into the backbend. Take five breaths, then change sides.



Tip

Your spine is vertical in this pose. If you find yourself leaning forward, extend your back hand towards the back of the mat.



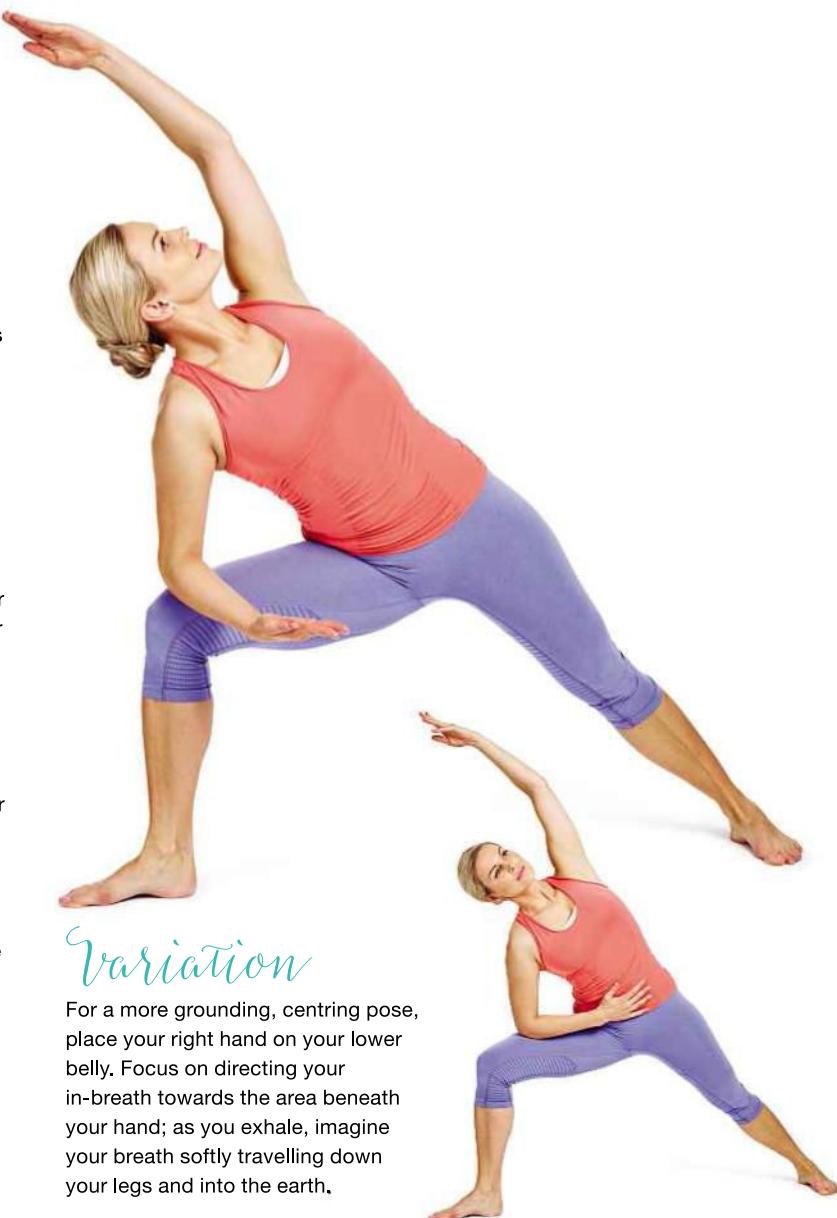
EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

- From Mountain pose (p50), step your feet slightly more than leg's distance apart and turn your right foot out 90°, your left foot in 15°. Align your heels (see Warrior II, facing page), and root through your toes and outer edge of the left foot.
- With your weight balanced evenly between both feet, inhale to raise your arms to the sides, shoulder height, parallel to the floor and palms facing down.
- Exhale, bend your right knee over your ankle, keeping a micro-bend in your left leg as you take your right forearm to your thigh and your left hand to your left hip.
- Tilt your tailbone towards your back heel and rotate your chest open. Then, on an inhale, sweep your left arm overhead and alongside your ear, palm facing down.
- Ground through the outer edge of your back foot to lengthen your entire left side body, from your foot right through to your left fingertips. Gaze at the floor or, if comfortable for your neck, your upper hand.
- Take five deep breaths into your belly, savouring the stretch. When you feel ready, exhale and return to standing. Pause for a moment before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Strengthens the legs
- Grounding
- Supports deeper breathing
- Aids balance



Variation

For a more grounding, centring pose, place your right hand on your lower belly. Focus on directing your in-breath towards the area beneath your hand; as you exhale, imagine your breath softly travelling down your legs and into the earth.

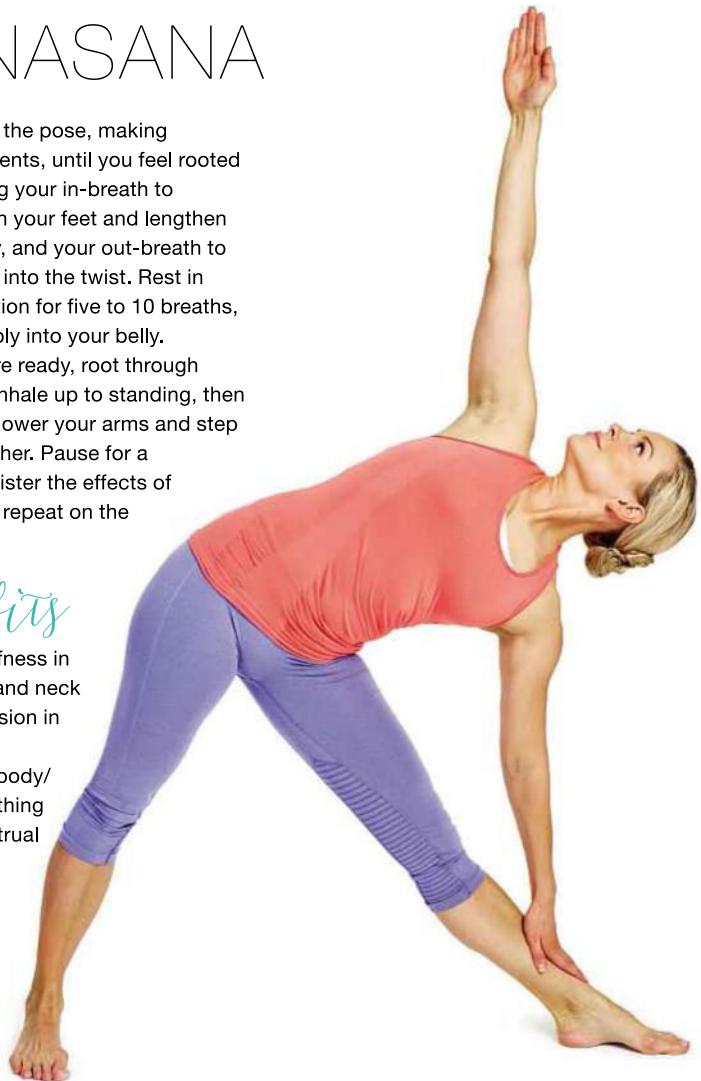
TRIANGLE POSE

UTTHITA TRIKONASANA

- Stand sideways on the centre of your mat and take a moment to arrive in your body, breathing deeply into your belly. When you feel ready, step your feet a leg's length apart.
- Turn your left foot out 90° and your right foot in 15°. Align your heels (or left heel to right instep), then root down through your big and little toes, the centre of your heels and the outer edge of your right foot. Breathe.
- Place your hands on your hips and tilt your left hip down and your right hip back and up. On an inhale, extend your arms out to shoulder height. As you exhale, keep your arms parallel to the floor as you reach your left hand outwards as far as is comfortable, before releasing it down to rest where it naturally lands, on your calf or ankle.
- On your next inhale, float your right arm overhead and rotate open your chest, so your right shoulder is above the left and your arms are in a straight line. Let your gaze rest on the floor, directly ahead or, if comfortable for your neck, turn your head to look up at your top hand.
- Breathe into the pose, making micro-adjustments, until you feel rooted but open, using your in-breath to ground through your feet and lengthen your side body, and your out-breath to release further into the twist. Rest in your final position for five to 10 breaths, breathing deeply into your belly.
- When you are ready, root through your feet and inhale up to standing, then exhale as you lower your arms and step your feet together. Pause for a moment to register the effects of the pose, then repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Relieves stiffness in the legs, hips and neck
- Relieves tension in the back
- Opens side body/ improves breathing
- Eases menstrual symptoms



Variations

For a more contained pose, reach your top arm behind your back, rest your forearm across your back waist and tuck your fingertips over the top of your thigh. Alternatively, lightly drape your top arm along your side ribs and hip.

HALF MOON

ARDHA CHANDRASANA

- From Triangle pose (facing page), to your right, step your back foot in slightly and place your right hand on a block about a foot in front and slightly outside your right foot.
- Keeping your right leg bent, place your left hand on your left hip and root through your right foot as you lean into the block until your left leg feels 'empty'. Inhale as you float your left leg up to hip height. Flex your rear ankle, spread your toes and extend through the ball of your left foot.
- Ground your right foot into the floor as you straighten your supporting leg and rotate your chest and pelvis open to the left, so your hips and shoulders are stacked one above the other.
- Keeping a soft gaze towards the floor, inhale and raise your left hand up to the ceiling.
- Breathe evenly from the belly for three to five breaths, imagining there are lines of energy travelling from your centre out through each limb.
- Exhale to lower, then pause in Wide-legged forward fold (p57) before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Eases fatigue
- Aids balance and focus
- Helpful for stress and anxiety
- Opens the ribs/improves breathing

Variation

FULL POSE

Once you can balance well using the block, place your hand on the floor instead, remembering to spread your fingertips and root into the ground to lift your torso upwards.



Tip

For extra stability in this pose, and to experience the correct alignment, try practising it with your back against a wall. As you progress, rest only your back foot against the wall.



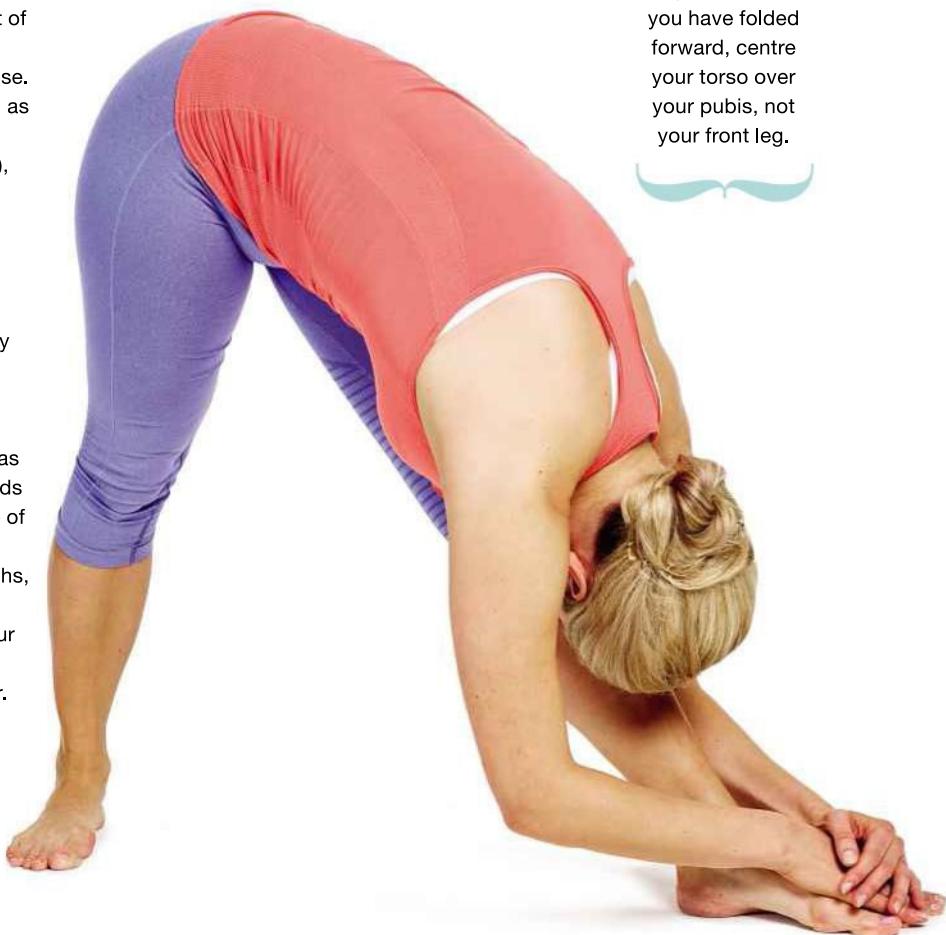
PYRAMID POSE

PARSVOTTANASANA

- With your feet parallel and hip-width apart, take a large step straight back with your right leg. Keeping your left foot as it is, pivot on your right heel so your foot is at a 45° angle. Spread your toes and root through your left big toe and the outer edge of your right foot. Lift your inner arches by drawing your ankles apart.
- With your hands on your hips, bring your right hip forward and your left hip back, so your pelvis is facing the front of your mat. Draw your inner thighs towards each other to stabilise the pose.
- Inhale and root down to the ground as you lengthen your spine then, on an exhale, with your hips in Dog tilt (p33), begin to fold forward, keeping your spine flat. Travel slowly and mindfully until you reach the end of your out-breath, then pause.
- On your next inhale, extend and lengthen your entire spine, then gently release on an exhale to fold further forward, letting your back naturally curve as you get lower. Continue lengthening and lowering in this way as far as is comfortable, taking your hands to your lower legs, a block either side of your front foot, or the floor.
- Rest in the pose for five to 10 breaths, breathing evenly through your nose. When you feel ready, root through your feet and inhale to return to standing, then exhale to step your feet together. Pause for a moment, then repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Increases blood flow to the head
- Calms the mind
- Aids deep breathing
- Develops balance



Tip

To keep your spine in a healthy alignment once you have folded forward, centre your torso over your pubis, not your front leg.

REVOLVING TRIANGLE

PARIVRTTA TRIKONASANA

- From Mountain pose (p50) with your feet hip-distance apart, take a moment to centre yourself, breathing softly and evenly into your belly. When you feel ready, slide your left foot straight back, about a leg's length behind you. Turn your left foot in 15° and ground through both feet.
- With your hands on your hips, use your right hand to draw your right hip back and your left hand to bring your left hip forward until your hips are square to the front. Unlock your knees.
- Inhale as you lengthen through the spine and raise your left arm overhead, forearm close to your ear, palm facing inward.
- Exhale and gently fold forward from the hips to take your spine toward a horizontal position. Rest your fingertips on the floor or on a block beneath your left shoulder.
- Inhale as you lengthen your spine forward through your crown and backward through your tailbone. Then, on an exhale, gently rotate your spine to open your chest to the right, raising your right arm vertically above you. Keep your gaze initially to the floor, raising it to the side and eventually overhead as the pose becomes more comfortable.
- Breathe evenly in the twist for five breaths, then exhale as you lower your top arm. Pause for a moment in Standing forward fold (p52), before inhaling as you uncurl your spine to return to standing. Repeat on the other side.



Tip

To aid your balance, place your back heel against a wall or, for even more support, place the outer edge of your front foot against the wall and twist towards it, using your right hand against the wall to help deepen your twist.

TREE

VRKSASANA

- Take two or three slow deep breaths in Mountain pose (p50) to become still, then transfer your weight onto your right leg. Spread your toes and ground through the base of the big and little toes. Lift the inner arch.
- Keeping a micro-bend in your supporting knee, focus on a fixed point ahead and place the sole of your left foot against your inner right thigh or calf (avoid the knee area or you could sustain an injury). Use your left hand to lift your foot if needed, then place your hands on your hips.
- Using Ocean breath (p28) throughout, press the sole of your left foot into your right thigh and engage your thigh to anchor your foot. Draw your left knee out to the side, your tailbone towards the floor and your belly to your spine. Root down through your supporting leg as you lift out of your waist, lengthening your spine though to your crown.
- Bring your hands to prayer position at your heart and, if you feel balanced here, slowly glide your hands overhead.
- Take three to five breaths in the pose then, when you feel ready, exhale and gently lower your hands and foot. Pause for a moment in Mountain pose before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Quiets the nervous system
- Focuses the mind
- Grounding
- Helps balance mind and body

Variation

LOTUS HANDS

Using lotus hands is a beautiful way to express the lightness and inherent rising energy. It also helps you connect to your softer side while still feeling strong and rooted in reality.



Tip

Trees sway in the wind. Rather than contracting your muscles into a rigid stance, imagine you're growing living roots down through your supporting leg and into the ground. This downward movement triggers a natural upward rebound of energy, which, together, creates a feeling of inner and outer stillness.

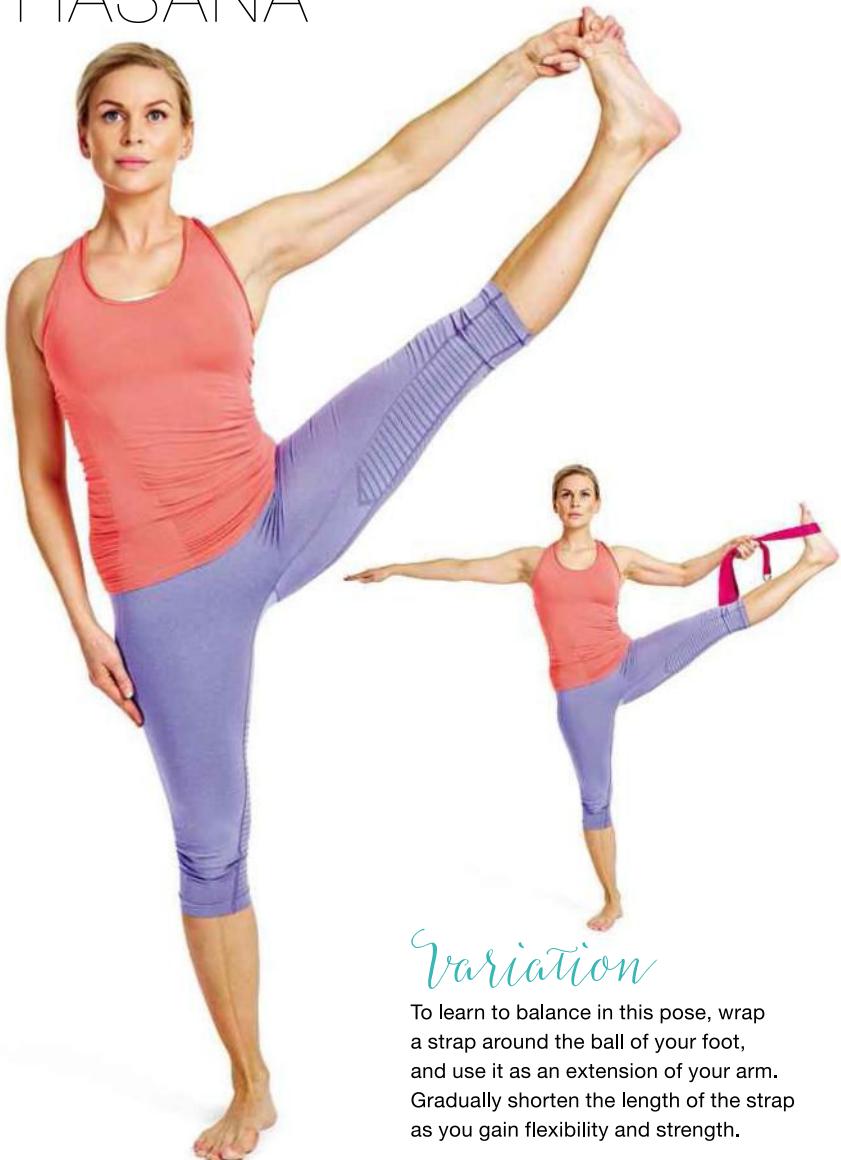
EXTENDED HAND-TO-TOE POSE

UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA

- From Mountain pose (page 50), transfer your weight over your right foot. Spread your toes and ground yourself through the base of the big and little toes. Lift the inner arch.
- Keeping a micro-bend in your right knee, raise your left leg, hugging your knee as close to your chest as you can without compromising your balance. Take a couple of breaths here, then release your leg and repeat on the other side.
- Take your weight to your right leg again and raise your left foot, this time placing your right hand on your hip and grasping your big toe with the thumb and first two fingers of your left hand.
- Inhale as you root through your supporting foot, drawing your navel to your spine, your shoulders down your spine and lifting through the crown. When you feel ready, exhale and extend your left leg out to the side. It may need to be bent initially, but over time, you will be able to straighten it as your balance improves.
- Take three to five breaths, directing your energy out through your extended limbs. When you feel ready, exhale and gently lower your hands and foot. Pause for a moment before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Balance
- Strength
- Steadiness
- Poise



Variation

To learn to balance in this pose, wrap a strap around the ball of your foot, and use it as an extension of your arm. Gradually shorten the length of the strap as you gain flexibility and strength.

EAGLE

GARUDASANA

- Stand in Mountain pose (p50) and take a few moments to feel connected to the earth. Lift your toes, spread them wide, then float them back down to the ground. Root through your big and little toes, lift your arches and let the weight of your body sink into your feet. Breathe.
- When you feel grounded, take your weight onto your left foot, bend your left knee and place your right thigh over your left, then wrap your right shin behind your left calf, hooking your toes right round. Gaze on a fixed point ahead to aid your balance.
- Softly inhale as you float your arms out to the sides to shoulder height. On an exhale, cross your arms in front of you, right elbow on top of left, then intertwine your forearms to bring your palms together (or, for beginners, the backs of your hands), thumbs facing you and fingertips pointing up.
- With your forearms vertical, draw your shoulder blades down your spine, and raise your elbows to open up the space between your shoulder blades.
- Use Abdominal breathing (p27) or Ocean breath (p28), to help you stay focused and balanced. Notice if you can keep your mind open and relaxed, despite your body being asymmetrical and twisted.
- Stay in the pose for 15 to 20 seconds, then exhale to unfurl your body. Pause in Mountain pose for a few moments, then repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Relieves stiff shoulders
- Boosts confidence
- Improves balance
- Aids concentration



Tip

This is a challenging balance.

Beginners can practise arms only first, then legs only, before putting the two together. Another good way to learn is to place a block outside the supporting foot, and rest the foot of your top leg on it.



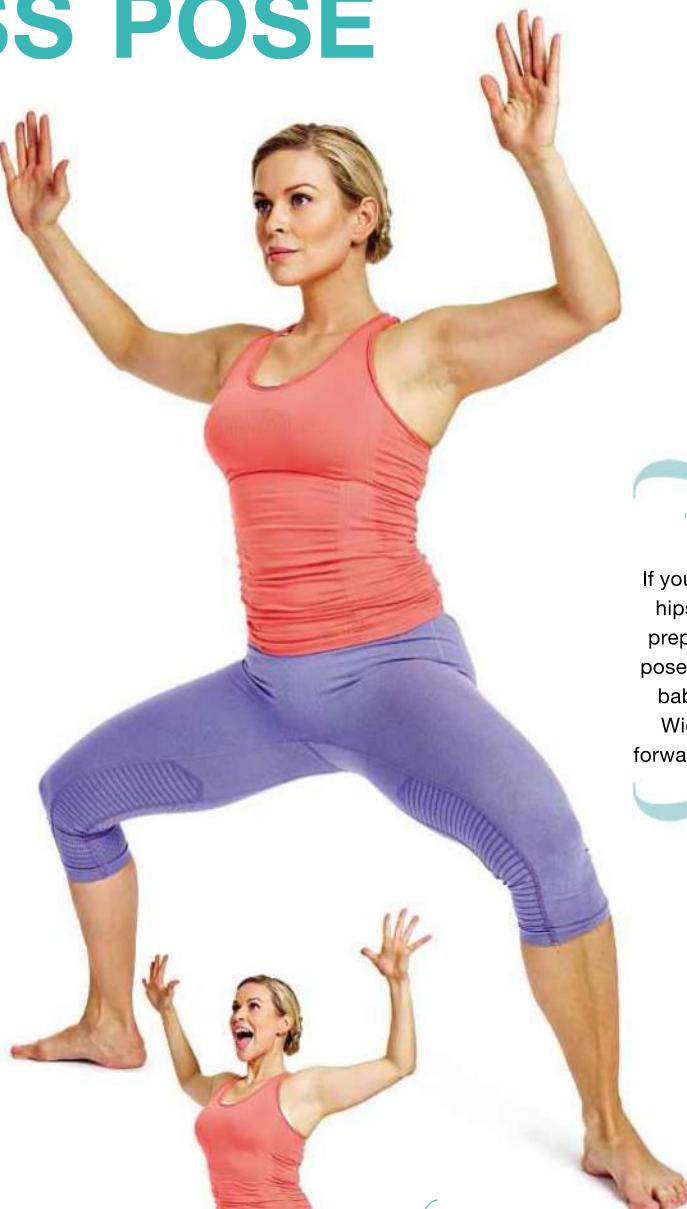
GODDESS POSE

DEVIASANA

- Take a few breaths to become centred in Mountain pose (p50). When you feel ready, step your feet wide and turn your toes out 45°. Spread your toes, and ground through your big toes and the outer edges of your feet.
- Inhale into your belly. As you exhale, bend your knees over your middle toes, going only as far as enables you to keep your spine vertical. If your knees fall inwards, bring your toes in slightly or step your feet closer together.
- Lengthen your tailbone towards the floor, and draw your belly button towards your spine.
- Inhale as you circle your arms out to the sides, to shoulder height, then bend your elbows 90°, to take your forearms to vertical. Turn your palms to face forward. Exhale as you sink deeper into the pose.
- Breathe deeply and evenly for five to 10 breaths, feeling the grounded strength of your legs, the gentle opening of your hips and heart.
- When you feel ready to come out of the pose, take your hands to your belly, right over left, and pause for a moment, connecting to your centre. Inhale as you root through your right foot to step your left and then right foot to the centre.

Benefits

- Grounding
- Balances masculine and feminine energy: willpower and receptivity
- Strengthens the arms and legs
- Opens the hips



Tip
If you know your hips are tight, prepare for this pose with Happy baby (p37) or Wide legged forward fold (p57).

Variation

WITH LION'S BREATH

For an energising, confidence-building pose, spread your fingers wide and take three lion's breaths. Open your eyes and mouth wide, extend your tongue out and take a deep breath in followed by a forceful exhale through the mouth.

EASY POSE

SUKHASANA

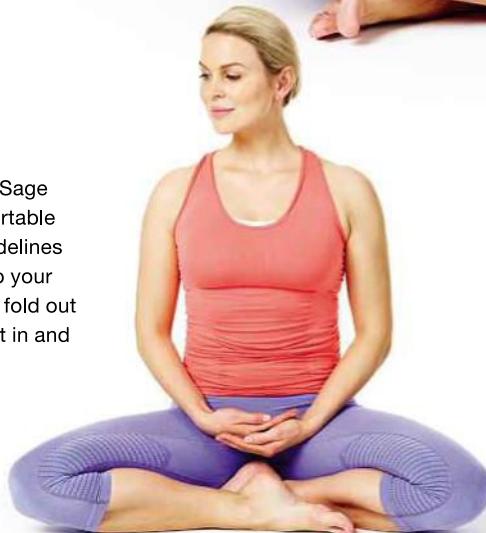
- Sit on your mat and cross your legs at the shins, so your lower legs are parallel to the front edge of the mat. Use your hands to draw one buttock and then the other away from your mid-line. This will help you root into the ground through your sitting bones.
- Flex your feet to stabilise and protect your knees, then place your hands (or fingertips) either side of your hips, and root down as you draw your navel to your spine and lengthen up out of your pelvis.
- Open your chest, draw your shoulder blades down your back and lift through the crown. Lengthen the back of your neck and softly close your eyes, or gaze a few feet in front of you on the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs, palms facing up, and allow your weight to sink into the floor on each exhale. Let your mind become still.
- Breathe calmly and evenly into your abdomen as long as is comfortable, then gently open your eyes.

Benefits

- Grounding and centring
- Soothes the nervous system
- Calms and settles the mind

Variation

You may find Accomplished or Sage pose (Siddhasana) more comfortable than Easy pose. Follow the guidelines above, but take your left heel to your perineum and let your left knee fold out to the side. Bring your right foot in and align your heels.



Tip

If your back is rounded, or your knees are higher than your hips, sit on a block or the edge of a bolster to bring your pelvis into neutral.



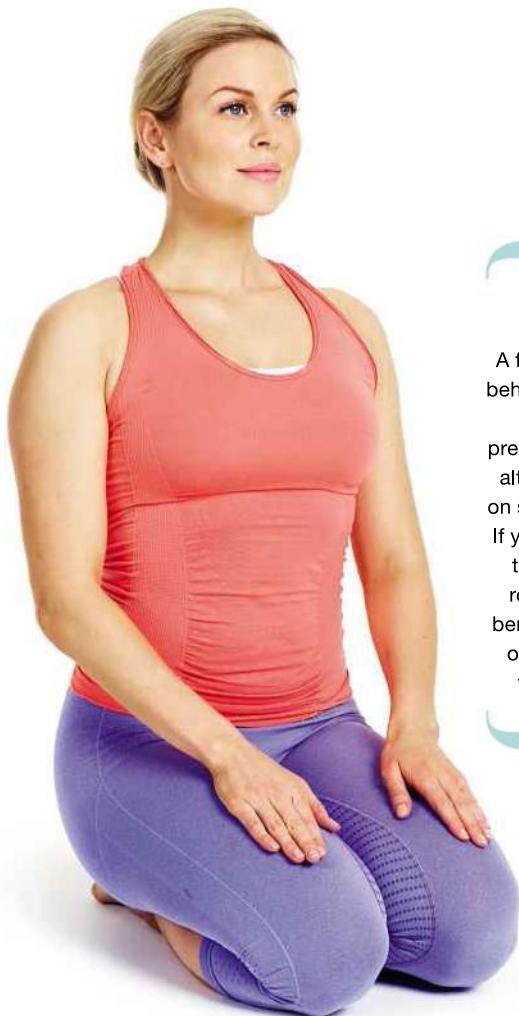
HERO POSE

VIRASANA

- Either sitting or standing, take a moment to attune to your body by breathing mindfully. When you feel ready, maintaining a mindful breath, come onto all fours, with your knees slightly apart. Have your shins parallel, tops of your feet flat on the floor and toes pointing directly backward.
- Using your hands as a support, gently lower your sitting bones onto your heels, or, if this isn't possible, onto a block or bolster placed lengthwise between your feet. Draw the flesh of your buttocks out to the sides, to allow your sitting bones to separate and your tailbone to release towards the floor. If necessary, adjust your pelvis to take it into neutral.
- As your tailbone drops, lift up through your spine, maintaining its vertical alignment as you take the front ribs slightly in towards the back ribs and separate the collar bones to create space in your chest.
- Draw your shoulder blades down your back and let your head balance evenly and lightly on the top of your spine, lengthening the back of your neck and extending up through the crown.
- Gently close your eyes and rest your hands on your thighs, palms up or down, whichever feels most comfortable.
- Breathe fully and deeply in the pose, and allow yourself to experience your body as it now is, letting your weight sink deeper on the exhale, a gentle expansion on the inhale. Remain in the pose for up to one minute.

Benefits

- Centring
- Eases high blood pressure
- Promotes healthy knees
- Strengthens the top of the feet



Tip

A folded blanket behind your knees will relieve pressure on them; alternatively, sit on several blocks. If your ankles are tight, place a rolled blanket beneath the front of your ankles for support.



Variation

RECLINING HERO

For a deep chest opener and to reduce fatigue in the legs, place the short end of a bolster directly behind your buttocks, then take your hands either side of your hips and slowly lean back onto your forearms and elbows to gently lower your torso back onto the bolster. Rest your arms out to the sides, palms facing upwards.

STAFF POSE

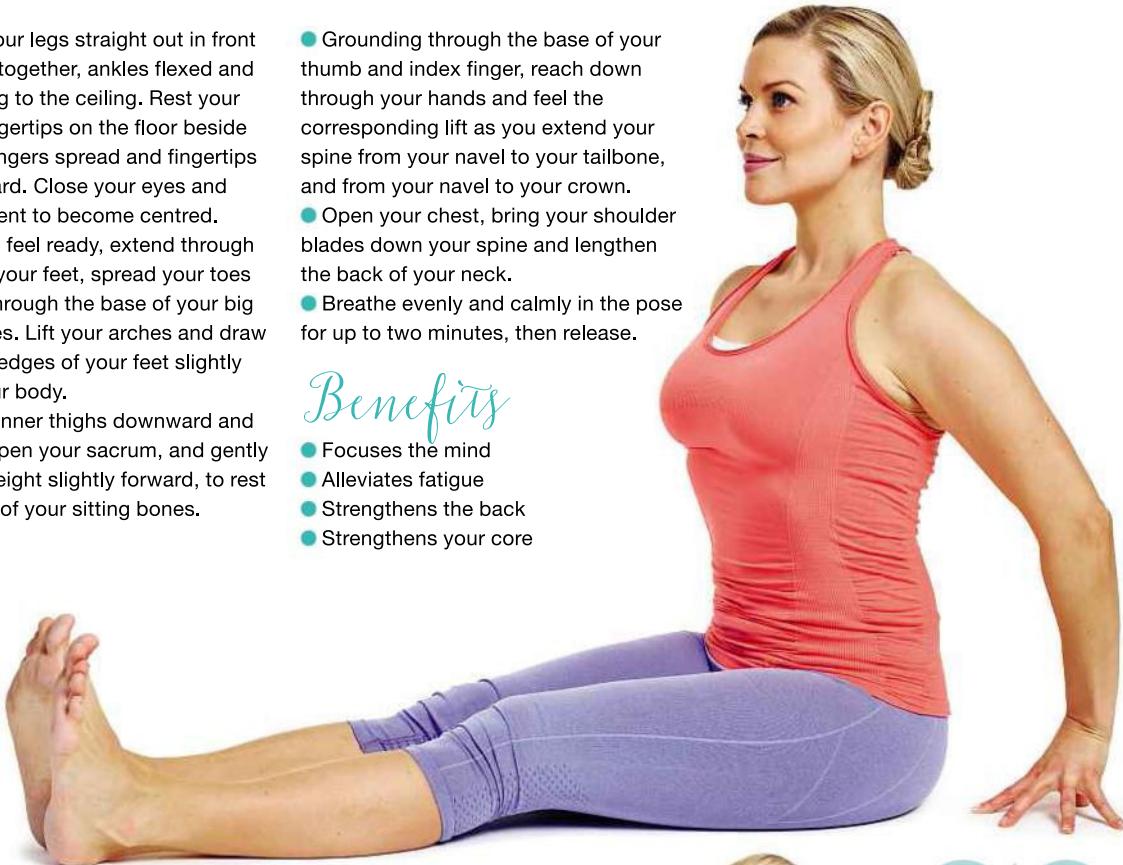
DANDASANA

- Sit with your legs straight out in front of you, feet together, ankles flexed and toes pointing to the ceiling. Rest your hands or fingertips on the floor beside your hips, fingers spread and fingertips facing forward. Close your eyes and take a moment to become centred.
- When you feel ready, extend through the balls of your feet, spread your toes and reach through the base of your big and little toes. Lift your arches and draw the outside edges of your feet slightly towards your body.
- Roll your inner thighs downward and inward, to open your sacrum, and gently shift your weight slightly forward, to rest on the front of your sitting bones.

- Grounding through the base of your thumb and index finger, reach down through your hands and feel the corresponding lift as you extend your spine from your navel to your tailbone, and from your navel to your crown.
- Open your chest, bring your shoulder blades down your spine and lengthen the back of your neck.
- Breathe evenly and calmly in the pose for up to two minutes, then release.

Benefits

- Focuses the mind
- Alleviates fatigue
- Strengthens the back
- Strengthens your core



Variation

Place your right hand on your outer thigh and your left on the floor behind you, fingertips pointing backward. Root through your sitting bones and hands to lengthen your torso out of your pelvis on an inhale, exhale as you rotate your spine to the left. Take two more breaths, each time inhaling to lengthen, exhaling to release further into the twist. Inhale to move back to centre, then repeat on the other side.



Tip
To feel more grounded, have a sense of a spiral curving from your outer hips, over your front thighs and down to your big toes.

SEATED WIDE-ANGLE FORWARD FOLD

UPAVISTHA KONASANA



PROPS: One/two bolsters or cushions

- Sit on the floor. Take your legs wide apart, kneecaps facing the ceiling, ankles flexed, inner edges of your feet vertical and feet resting on the centre of the back of each heel. Place one or two bolsters in between your legs and place your hands on your belly, close your eyes and take three deep abdominal breaths.
- When you're ready to progress, use your hands to take the flesh of your buttocks backwards and away from your mid-line, so you can rest on the front of your sitting bones.
- Place your hands beside your hips, and root through your fingertips and sitting bones to lengthen your spine. Draw your navel to your spine, open your chest and draw your shoulder blades down your back. Float your crown up to the sky.

- When you feel ready, place your hands on the floor in front of you. On an inhale, lengthen your front body by drawing your lower back forward, then, exhale and walk your hands forward as you fold forward from the hips, leading with your heart.
- When you reach your edge, allow your breath to soften your body, and rest on the bolster for up to five minutes, breathing slowly and evenly, changing the direction of your head half-way through.
- To come out, inhale as you walk your hands back to bring you up to sitting.

Benefits

- Deeply relaxing
- Calms the brain
- Soothes mental agitation



Tip

This can be a strong pose. If you feel a strain behind your knees, slightly bend your legs or place a folded towel under each knee.



HEAD TO KNEE POSE

JANU SIRSASANA

- From Staff pose (page 72), fold your left leg in, so your left heel touches your pubic bone and the sole rests on your inner thigh. Draw your right hip back and your left knee forward to square your hips.
- Flex your right foot, spread your toes and reach through the ball of your foot. Lift your right kneecap and place your hands either side of your right thigh. Draw your navel to your spine.
- Inhale and root through your fingertips and sitting bones to lengthen your torso. Then, on an exhale, lead with the crown of your head to fold forward from the hips, taking your chest to your right thigh. Keep your spine long, core engaged and shoulder blades drawn in and down. As you get lower, take your hands to your shin, ankle or sole of the foot.

- Inhale again, to lengthen, then exhale and fold a little further forward. Continue in this way until you feel a resistance, then pause and wait for your muscles to soften before folding a little deeper. When you reach your edge, release your head down towards your right knee.
- Enjoy the sensation of surrender and find your still point, breathing evenly and deeply for up to two minutes. Release to come up to sitting and pause before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Improves circulation in the spine
- Strengthens the spine and legs
- Relieves tension in the lower back
- Quiets the mind



Tip

The aim of this pose is to lengthen the front body rather than take your head to your knees, despite its English name! Use a strap around the ball of your foot to help you experience the feeling of lowering with a flat back.



SEATED FORWARD FOLD

PASCHIMOTTANASANA

- From Staff pose (p72), inhale and take your arms overhead. Exhale as you release your shoulder blades down your back and draw your arms into your shoulder sockets.
- On the next inhalation, root through your sitting bones to extend your spine up out of your pelvis. As you exhale, fold forward slightly from your hips with a flat back. Pause, then inhale again as you lengthen your spine and, leading from your heart, fold further forwards.
- Continue moving, breath-by-breath, lengthening your front and back spine evenly, as you reach your torso up and forward to fold over your thighs. As you get lower, release your spine and take your hands either to your shins, outer edges of your feet, or clasp your hands behind your feet.
- Maintain the space around your neck by drawing your shoulders away from

your ears, and keep your neck long by extending through the crown and drawing your chin to your chest.

- Breathe deeply and evenly in the pose, feeling the strength of your legs and the expansion in your back body as your spine gently undulates with each in- and out-breath.
- When you feel ready, take a deep inhalation and reach up with your crown as you lead with your heart to return to sitting. Rest for a moment or two with your eyes closed as you allow your body to register the effect of the pose.

Benefits

- Rests the mind
- Relieves stress, anxiety
- Reduces fatigue
- Eases insomnia



Tip

If you have tight hamstrings, sit on a folded blanket, bend your knees or use a strap around the balls of your feet. If your back rounds, sitting on a bolster can be helpful.



SHOELACE WITH EAGLE ARMS

- Spend a moment or two in Child's pose (p78) to let your breath settle, then when you feel ready, come up onto all-fours. Lift your right knee, take it back slightly and cross it over your left calf to place it outside your left shin. Spread your feet away from each other, then exhale as you gently lower your bottom to sit between your feet.
- Root evenly through both sitting bones. If one side doesn't touch the floor, place a folded blanket or thin block beneath it. Holding a foot in each hand, guide your feet as far forward as is comfortable, keeping one knee above the other.
- Take a couple of breaths to acclimatise to the stretch; root through the sitting bones as you open your chest, lengthen the back of your neck and lift through your crown on the in-breath, allowing your weight to sink down on the out-breath.
- Softly inhale as you float your arms out to the sides, shoulder height. Exhale and cross your arms in front of you, your left elbow on top of your right, then intertwine your forearms to bring your palms together, fingertips pointing up and thumbs facing you. Gently close your eyes.
- Take a few gentle Ocean breaths (p28), expanding into your back and side body, then let your breath find its natural rhythm. Settle into a sense of stillness, resting in the pose for up to two minutes.
- Gently release your arms, and, with great care, your legs, then pause for a moment in a comfortable seated position before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Deeply stills the mind
- Calms anxiety
- Removes tension from the shoulders
- Strong hip opener



Variation

If your bottom leg is uncomfortable in Shoelace, try Half shoelace, with the bottom leg extended.

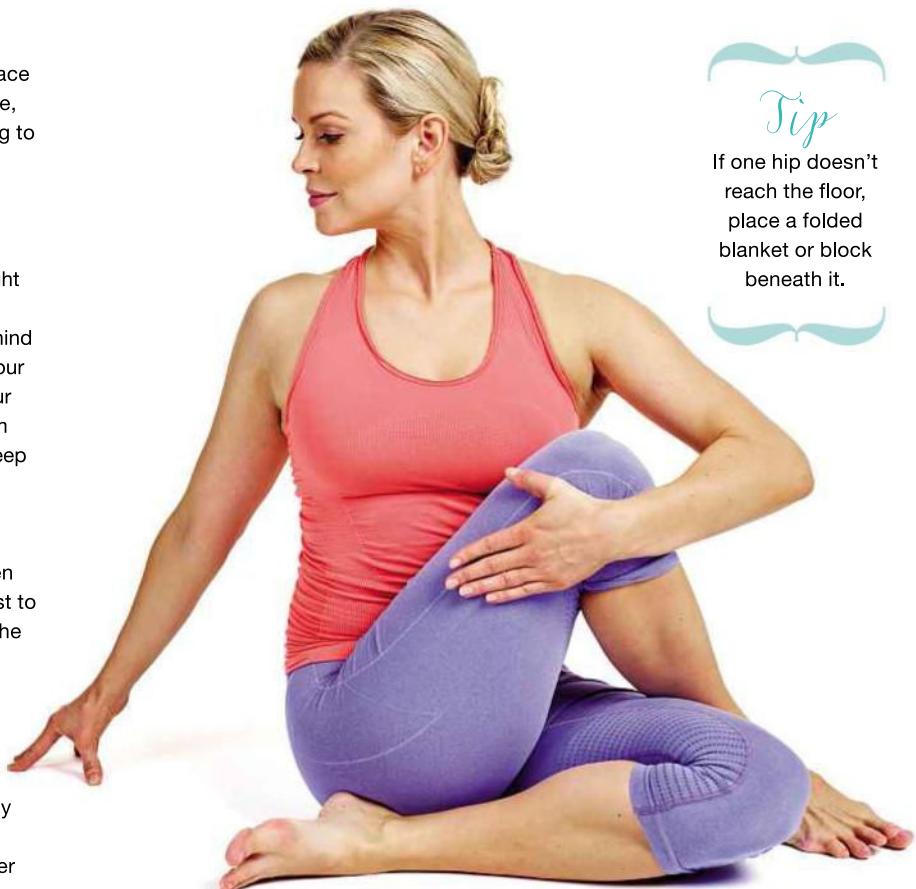
LORD OF THE FISHES POSE

ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

- Take a few breaths in Staff pose (p72) to become grounded, then place your right foot outside your left knee, toes forward and right knee pointing to the ceiling. Bend your left knee and slide your left foot to the outside of your right hip. Root down through your sitting bones.
- Wrap your left arm around your right knee and rest your right fingertips, pointing backwards, on the floor behind you. If comfortable, inhale to raise your left hand, and on an exhale, take your elbow outside your left knee, forearm vertical and palm facing the right. Keep your spine vertical and draw your shoulder blades into your back.
- Inhale as you root through your fingers and sitting bones to lengthen your spine, then as you exhale, twist to the right. Move a little deeper into the stretch with each breath. Rooting down to elongate on the inhale, bringing your lower back in and up, and releasing a little deeper into the twist on the exhale. Take your time, listening to the cues your body is giving you.
- Lastly, turn your head to gaze over your right shoulder, breathing evenly from the belly for another five breaths.
- Inhale to gently ease back to the centre, then pause before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Eases tension in the back
- Tones spinal nerves
- Opens the chest
- Relieves stiff hips



Tip
If one hip doesn't reach the floor, place a folded blanket or block beneath it.

Variation

For a simpler twist, keep one leg straight, remembering to flex your ankle and reach through the ball of your foot. Place the other foot four fingers' distance from your knee. As before, inhale to lengthen the spine and exhale to twist.



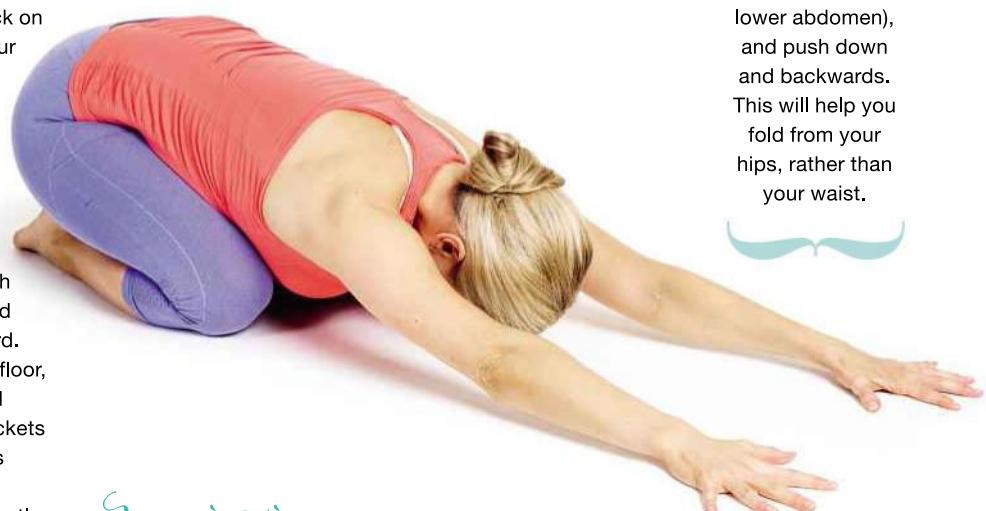
EXTENDED CHILD'S POSE

UTTHITA BALASANA

- Kneeling on your mat, take three breaths into your belly, then draw your knees apart and bring your big toes together, heels wide. Sit back on the soles of your feet and rest your palms on your thighs.
- Inhale as you root into your sitting bones to lengthen your spine. On an exhale, slowly walk your hands forward, as you lower your torso between your thighs.
- Take your hands shoulder-width apart, palms down, fingers spread and middle finger pointing forward. Actively root your hands into the floor, keep your elbows off the mat and draw your arms into your arm sockets as you slide your shoulder blades down your back.
- Exhale and lower your head, gently resting your forehead on the floor, a block or a bolster, depending on your flexibility. Softly close your eyes.
- Breathe deeply and evenly into your back body for five breaths, sinking deeper into the mat on each exhale. As you extend through to your fingertips, reach your tailbone back to your heels.
- On an exhale, use your hands to gently bring you up to a comfortable seated position. Pause a moment to register the effects of the pose.

Benefits

- Relieves stress and fatigue
- Encourages introspection
- Nurturing
- Calming



Tip

If your spine rounds excessively, come back up to kneeling, place your thumbs in your hip creases (between the top of your thigh and lower abdomen), and push down and backwards. This will help you fold from your hips, rather than your waist.

Variations

VARIATION 1

Take your hands beside your hips, palms facing upwards. Turn your head to rest on one side, remembering to create space around your neck by drawing your shoulders away from your ears. Rest here for up to five minutes, turning your head half-way through.



VARIATION 2

From Extended child's pose, inhale, ground your hands on the mat, raise your head and walk your hands round to your right. On an exhale, release your left hip back onto your left foot. Breathe into your left side body and feel the expansion of your ribs. Take two more breaths here, then exhale to walk your hands back to centre and repeat on the other side.



GENTLE COBRA

BHUJANGASANA



Tip

If you're new to Cobra, take your hands wider apart and turn your wrists outward. If you want a more energising stretch, lengthen your arms fully.



- Lie on your stomach with your forehead resting on the floor. Take a couple of deep breaths, then spread your feet hip-distance apart, ankles straight and toes spread. Straighten your legs, aligning your knees with your middle toes, and engage your inner leg muscles, lifting your inner thighs up and out. Root through your pubic bone.
- Place your hands beneath your shoulders, palms facing down, fingers spread and wrist crease parallel with the front edge of your mat. Root through the base of the thumbs and index fingers.
- Draw your elbows together and rotate your shoulders up, back and down to create space at the base of your neck,

- then release your shoulder blades down your back and in towards your spine.
- Engage your abdomen and root through your pelvic bone to extend your sacrum to your tailbone.
- Inhale, and raise your head and shoulders as far as is comfortable by drawing the back of your neck upwards, so your eyes remain looking down. Exhale.
- On an inhale, ground through your hands, as if you were pulling the floor towards you, and feel your chest open as you curl your spine further forward and up.
- Lengthen your spine evenly without compressing the back of your neck or

your lumbar spine, and see if you can feel a sense of lightness as you lift your back body.

- Breathe normally in the pose for three to five breaths. Slowly and with control, exhale as you lower your body to the floor one vertebra at a time, and rest your head on one side.

Benefits

- Strengthens the spine, tones the spinal nerves
- Eases tension in the back, shoulders and neck
- Helps relieve stress and fatigue
- Opens the heart and lungs

SLEEPING PIGEON

SUPTA EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA



- Come onto all-fours, with your hands shoulder-distance apart, about a handspan in front of your shoulders. Bring your left knee forward and place it behind and outside your left wrist. Initially, your right shinbone is at about a 45° angle, with your right heel beneath your left hip. As you progress, place your shin parallel to the front edge of the mat for a stronger hip opener.
- Slide your right leg straight behind you, and rest on the centre of your front thigh. Draw your left hip forward and your right hip back to square the pelvis.
- Inhale and root through your hands to lengthen your spine, extending through the crown, then, on an exhale, fold

forward over your bent leg. Place your forehead on the back of your hands or rest it on a bolster.

- This is a strong hip opener – direct your breath towards tension in your hip to help disperse the intensity. Breathe softly and deeply for up to a minute.
- When you are ready to come out, inhale and root through your hands to come up and gently release your legs. Repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Calming
- Rests the brain
- Releases tension in the hips



Tip

It's important to protect your sacrum in this pose. If the hip of your bent leg doesn't reach the floor, place a block or folded blanket beneath it, so your hips are fully supported.



GARLAND POSE MALASANA

- Centre yourself in Mountain pose (p50) then, when you feel ready, step your feet wider than hip-width apart. Inhale, and on an exhale, gently crouch down into a low squat, taking your hands to the floor in front of you.
 - Turn your feet out, so your knees are over your toes, then lower your heels, taking your feet as far apart as needed so your heels can anchor firmly into the ground.
 - Lift your hands into prayer position and let your tailbone release to the mat.
 - Press your palms together as you root through your feet, and push your upper arms into your inner thighs, your thighs into your arms. This will help you lift out of your pelvis to lengthen through your spine.
 - Draw your shoulder blades down your back and let your chest expand. Take five to 10 deep breaths into your belly.
 - When you’re ready to come out, release your hands and come to a comfortable seated position for a few breaths while you register the effects of the pose.

Benefits

- Relieves tension in the back
 - Loosens the hips
 - Calming
 - Aids focus



Tip

This can be a strong pose. If your heels don't touch the floor place a folded blanket beneath them to support you.

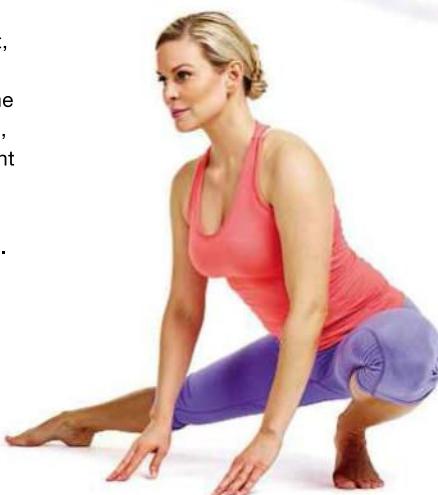
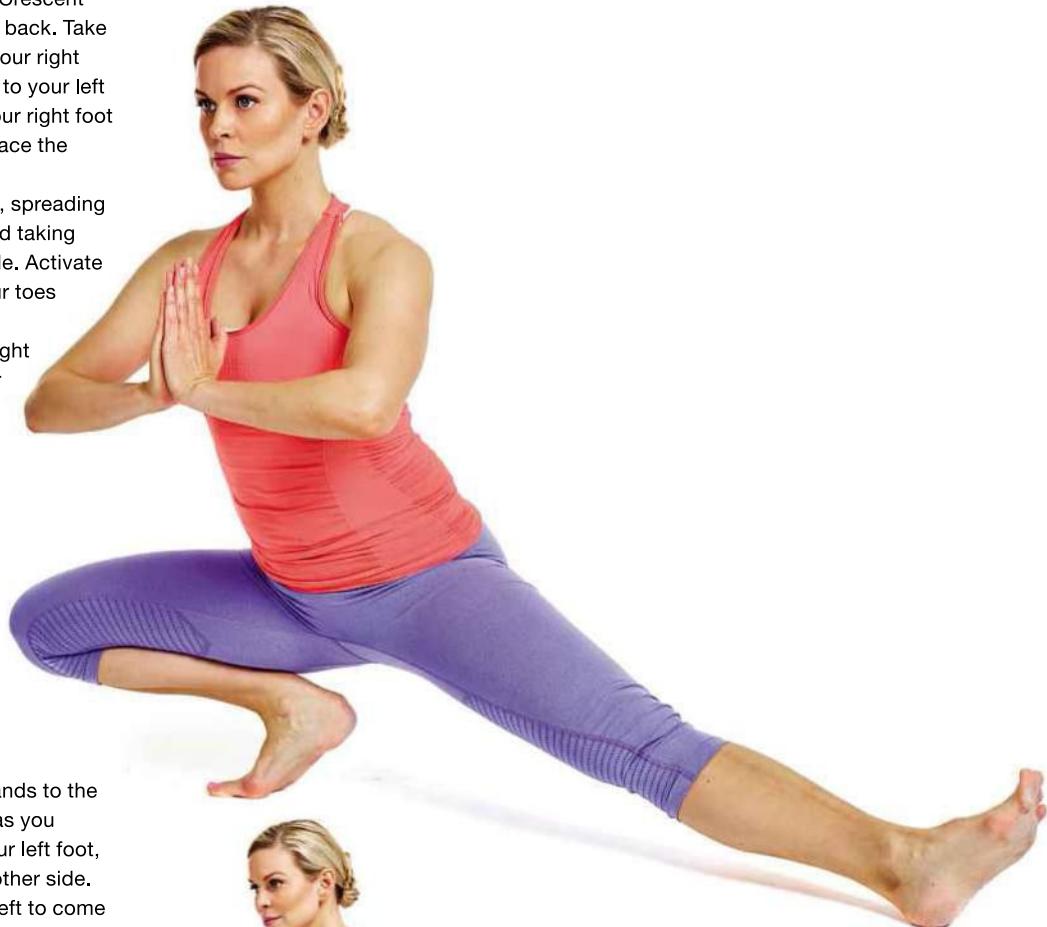
HALF SQUAT

SKANDASANA

- From standing, lower into Crescent moon (p54) with your left leg back. Take both hands to the inside of your right foot. Walk your hands round to your left as you pivot on the ball of your right foot and heel of your left foot to face the long side of your mat.
- Sit back on your right heel, spreading the toes of your right foot and taking your right knee out to the side. Activate your left foot by pointing your toes to the ceiling.
- Root down through your right toes as you inhale to lift your torso, shoulder blades sliding down your spine. Bring your hands together into prayer position.
- Continue rooting down to lengthen through the spine, counterbalancing this by drawing your shoulders down your back. Focus on a fixed point ahead to aid your balance and breathe deeply and evenly for three to five breaths.
- When ready, lower your hands to the floor, walk them to your left as you transfer your weight onto your left foot, and repeat the pose on the other side.
- To come out, pivot to the left to come into Crescent in the opposite direction, with your hands either side of your front foot, then step your back foot forward to bring your feet together. Slowly uncurl your spine to return to standing.

Benefits

- Calms the mind
- Aids balance
- Strengthens the legs



Variation

This is a challenging balance. As you learn, practise by resting your hands on the floor and lowering the toes of your straight leg towards the long side of your mat.

SPONTANEOUS FLOWING HALF SQUAT

SAHAJA ARDHA MALASANA



- Take a moment in Mountain pose (p50) to still your mind. When you feel ready to begin, step your left foot back into High lunge (p55), hands either side of your front foot. Inhale, then as you exhale, pivot on your front heel and back toes to turn your body to the left so your feet are parallel and you face the long edge of your mat. Ground through your feet.
- With a smooth flowing breath, allow your upper body to cascade downward as you slowly transfer your weight to your left foot, bending your left knee

deeply and straightening your right leg (a). At the same time, release your arms and allow them to drape over the floor towards your left foot.

- Transfer your weight back to your right, with right leg bent and left straight (b), trailing your arms behind you.
- Keep your spine long, release your neck and let your upper body and arms move in a flowing, sweeping motion, like seaweed in the ocean, as you alternate a few times between your right and left sides, breathing freely.

- Finish on your right, and pivot in a clockwise direction to come back into lunge, then lower your left knee, and step your right foot back to come into Child's pose (p78). Rest here for a few breaths to absorb the experience of the flowing sequence.

Benefits

- Deeply relaxing
- Releases tension in the hips
- Strengthens the legs

PLOUGH

HALASANA

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor and your arms by your sides, palms down. Take a few breaths into your belly to quieten your mind.
- When you're ready to continue, bring your knees in towards your chest, then straighten your legs to take your feet up towards the ceiling.
- Take a deep breath in, then, on an exhale, root through your hands to lift your legs up and over your head to the floor behind you, knees slightly bent, toes tucked under. At the same time,

take your hands to your side ribs to support your back.

- Be in an easy Plough for a few moments, with your back slightly curved, while your body acclimatises. Then inhale as you lift your hips towards the ceiling to bring your spine into a vertical position. Straighten your legs and reach through your heels (pictured). If comfortable here, release your hands and interlace your fingers, stretching your arms out along the floor as you draw your shoulder blades together.
- Take 10–20 slow, smooth breaths. To

come out of the pose, release your hands, lift your feet and roll down one vertebra at a time until you are lying on your back again.

- Pause for a moment or two before coming into Bridge (p86) – a counter-pose that realigns your spine.

Benefits

- Reduces stress
- Alleviates fatigue
- Calms the brain
- Eases insomnia



Tip

You can also come into Plough from Shoulder stand (p85), lowering one leg at a time to the floor. Try both versions and use whichever feels right for you on the day.



Variation

If your feet don't reach the floor, practise against a wall. This will help you bring your back into a vertical position and reduce strain on your neck. As you progress, gradually walk your feet down the wall.



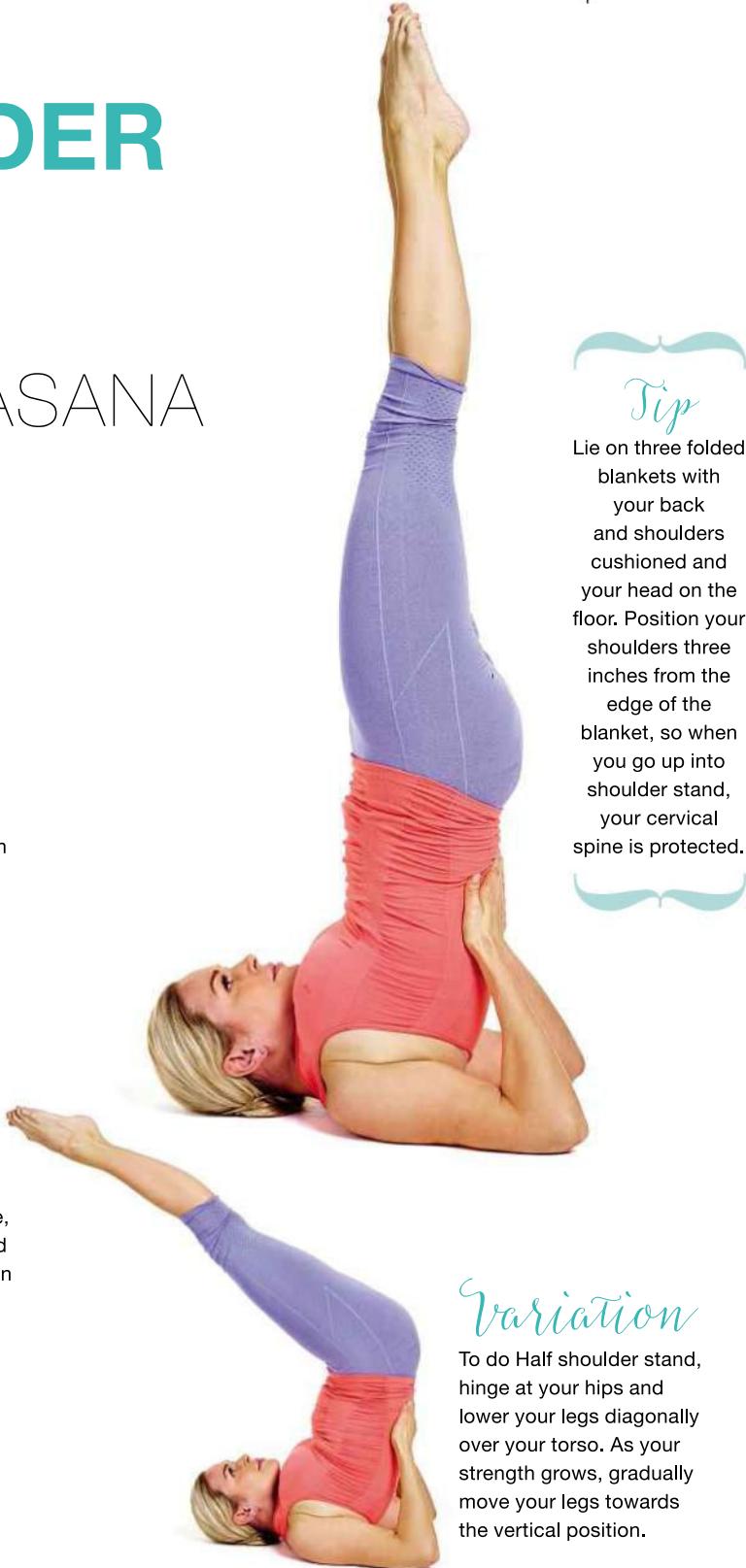
SHOULDER STAND

SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor and arms out to your sides, palms facing upwards. Take three deep breaths into your belly to release any tension.
- When you feel ready to begin, exhale as you raise your hips to bring your knees over your chest.
- Inhale, then exhale and root through your elbows to raise your torso, lifting buttocks to the ceiling and your knees towards your head. Place your hands on your back to support your spine.
- Snuggle your shoulders towards each other and draw your elbows close to your body. On an exhale, roll back a little further to take your hips directly over your shoulders and slowly raise your feet towards the ceiling.
- Press your hands into your back to help bring your spine into vertical, and reach up strongly, lengthening your inner and outer legs upward, so your body is perpendicular to the floor from your shoulders to your toes.
- Take 10–20 breaths, breathing slowly and evenly into your belly. On an exhale, bend your knees, release your arms and slowly uncurl your spine to release down to the floor, one vertebra at a time.

Benefits

- Reduces fatigue
- Alleviates insomnia
- Calms the brain
- Relieves stress



Tip

Lie on three folded blankets with your back and shoulders cushioned and your head on the floor. Position your shoulders three inches from the edge of the blanket, so when you go up into shoulder stand, your cervical spine is protected.



Variation



To do Half shoulder stand, hinge at your hips and lower your legs diagonally over your torso. As your strength grows, gradually move your legs towards the vertical position.

BRIDGE

SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA



- Lie on your back and take a moment to arrive in your body. When you feel ready, bend your knees and place your feet hip-distance apart and parallel, directly beneath your knees. Rest your arms at your sides, palms facing down.
- Inhale, ground through your feet and, on an exhale, tilt your tailbone up to gently peel your spine away from the floor, vertebra by vertebra.
- Keep your thighs parallel, knees hip-distance apart and continue rooting through your feet to lift your chest. Roll your shoulders up, back and down, then lengthen the back of your neck.
- Bring your hands together beneath you, interlink your fingers and snuggle your shoulders together. Focus on grounding through your feet to lift through the heart.
- Take five deep breaths into your abdomen, then, on an exhale, slowly uncurl your spine to rest on the floor.
- Extend one leg at a time, then rest for a few moments with your eyes closed.

Tip
If your knees tend to splay outwards, practise with a foam block between your thighs, to help you engage your inner thigh muscles.

Benefits

- Boosts the nervous system
- Calms the brain
- Rests the heart
- Helps reduce insomnia

Variation

For a more relaxing pose, have your arms at your sides, palms facing upwards, and place a foam brick beneath your sacrum. Allow your weight to surrender into the support and rest with your eyes closed for up to two minutes.

RELAXATION POSE

SAVASANA



- Sit on the floor with your knees bent, your feet on the floor and hands resting behind you. Raise your buttocks, and tilt your tailbone forward to flatten your lower back, then gently release your sacrum to the floor.
- Lower onto your elbows to lie flat on your back and extend your arms a comfortable distance from your sides, palms facing upward. Extend one leg at a time, taking your feet a little wider than hip-distance apart, and allow your feet to roll out to the sides.
- Wriggle your torso a little, to snuggle your body into the floor then, checking that your arms and legs are symmetrical, rest your head on the centre of the back of your skull. Gently close your eyes.
- Begin to allow any tension in your body to seep away into the floor, consciously letting go on each exhalation.
- Breathe softly and evenly into your belly, letting your eyelids be heavy, and your eyes sink deeper into their sockets. Relax your temples and soften your jaw. Release your neck, shoulders and arms. Invite your belly to expand and your thighs, calves and ankles to relax. Let everything be soft and heavy.
- Allow your muscles to melt into your bones and your bones to sink into the mat.
- Rest for five to 10 minutes. Breathe

naturally, allowing your body to experience a sense of expansion as you inhale, and a feeling of softening as you exhale.

- To come out of the pose, without disturbing the atmosphere you have created, slowly wriggle your fingers and toes to bring movement back to your body. Softly slide your arms out to the sides and overhead, and gently stretch your body from your feet to your fingertips. Slowly bring your knees to your chest, wrap your arms around them and gently rock from side to side.
- Roll over to your right hand side and rest for few moments, then use your left hand to help you come up to sitting. Rest in Easy pose (p70) for a minute or two, to acclimatise your spine to being upright once more.
- When you get up, move softly and mindfully, to keep the sense of relaxation with you as you move into the next phase of your day.

Benefits

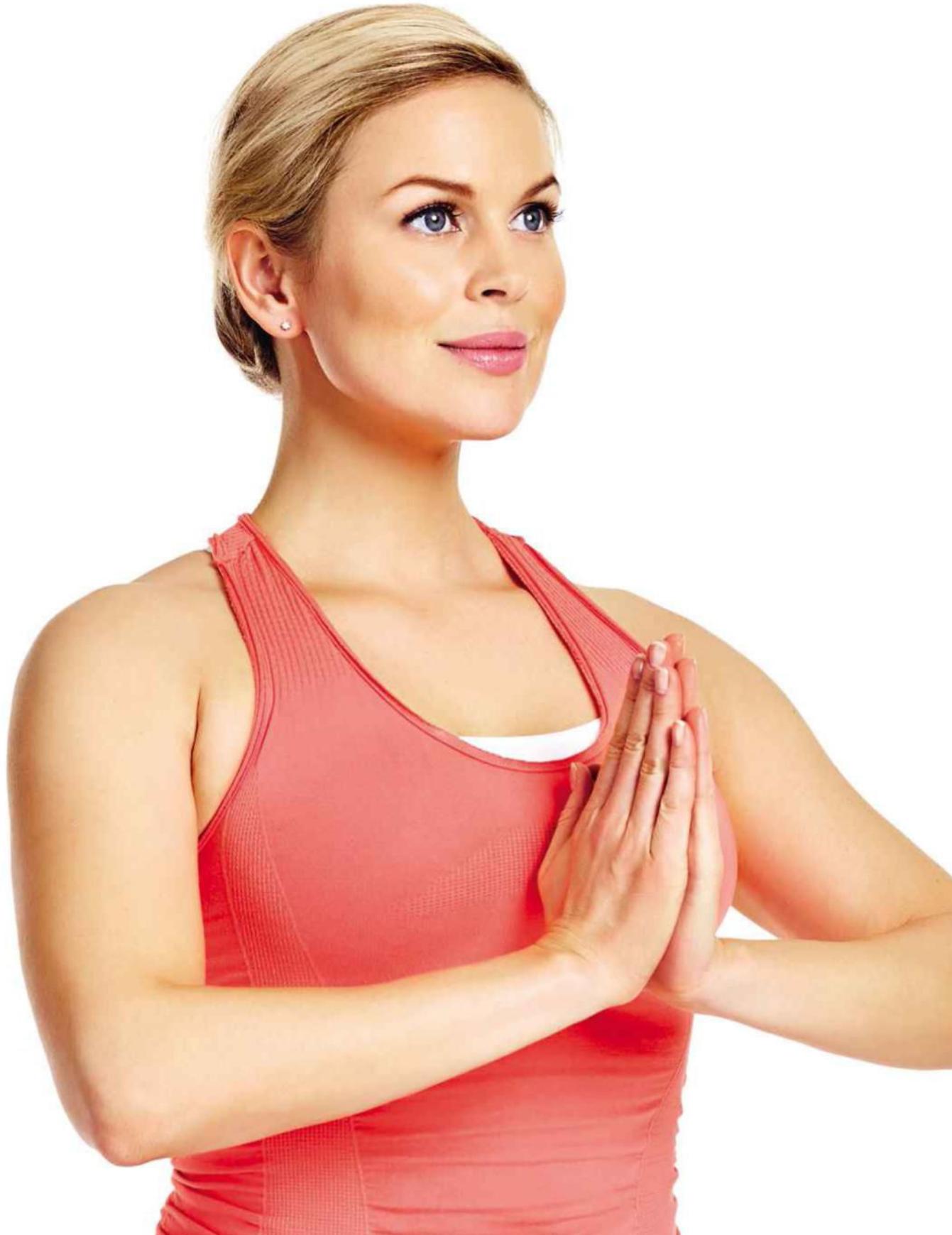
- Deeply relaxing
- Balances mind, body and spirit
- Rejuvenating
- Reduces fatigue
- Teaches you to be tension free
- Calms the mind



Tip

BSK Iyengar once said that Savasana is the most difficult yoga asana. Learning to relax fully is not always easy, but it can be a life-changing experience. Use this pose to begin to explore what relaxation and expansion feels like in your body.





The SEQUENCES



Whether you need the perfect wake-up call for a sleepy body and mind first thing, a de-stressing practice to help you wind down in the evening, or a confidence-boosting series of poses that will give you the lift you need before that job interview or exam, we have the perfect sequence to suit the moment. The following nine series also include breathing exercises and meditations. Incorporate these into your practice and you'll have the perfect tools to transform your mood, wind down for bed or transition to the next stage of the day.

MORNING GROUNDING SEQUENCE

Before you rush headlong into the day, recalibrate your nervous system with this balancing and stabilising sequence

The standing poses help strengthen your legs, giving you a more solid connection to the earth, while the upward movements of the arms are gently awakening. Use this sequence whenever you need to feel calm, grounded and ready to greet the day from your centre.

Arrive

Accomplished pose (p70)

Take a few deep breaths into your abdomen to help draw your energy into your lower body. Allow your breath to soften and slow down, and have the sense that when you exhale, your breath travels down through your sitting bones and into the earth. While here, take a moment to register how you're feeling. When you're ready, begin the sequence.

Warm-up

- Accomplished pose, taking your arms overhead, then to the sides

- Cat and Cow pose (p38)

- Tiger pose to side stretch and side gate, on both sides (p36)

- Moon salute I (p44)

Complete two rounds of Moon Salute I, using Ocean breath (p28). Pause in each pose for a couple of breaths on the first round, then switch sides and move in a continuous flow on the second.

Poses

1 Mountain pose with lotus hands (p50)

With hands at your heart, inhale as you reach your lotus hands overhead. On an exhale, release into Standing forward fold, and touch the ground with the lotus. As you inhale, 'scoop' up the earth to 'grow your lotus', bringing your hands into the shape of the flower as you return to standing, hands at heart. This is one round. Do three rounds.

2-4 Warrior II flow (p60-61)

Move between Warrior II, Reverse warrior and Extended side-angle pose, with your hand to your belly. This is one round. Do three rounds.

Rest for two or three breaths in each pose on the first round, then repeat twice more as one flow. On the last round, from Reverse warrior, straighten your front leg to come into...

5 Triangle with bind (p62)

Stay here for five breaths.

Lower your top arm and walk your hands between your feet to come into...

6 Wide-legged standing forward fold (p57)

Take three to five breaths here. Walk your hands round to your left foot, then circle your right arm in a large arc forward, overhead and back as you come up to repeat steps 2-4 on the other side.

7 Tree with lotus hands (p66)

Take three to five breaths here, using Ocean breath (p28).

Step your foot out to the side to come into...

8 Garland pose (p81)

Take five breaths here.

9 Staff pose, with twist (p72)

Take three breaths in Staff pose, then twist to both sides for a further three breaths.

10 Bridge (p86)

Take five breaths here.

Closing pose

● Relaxation pose (p87)

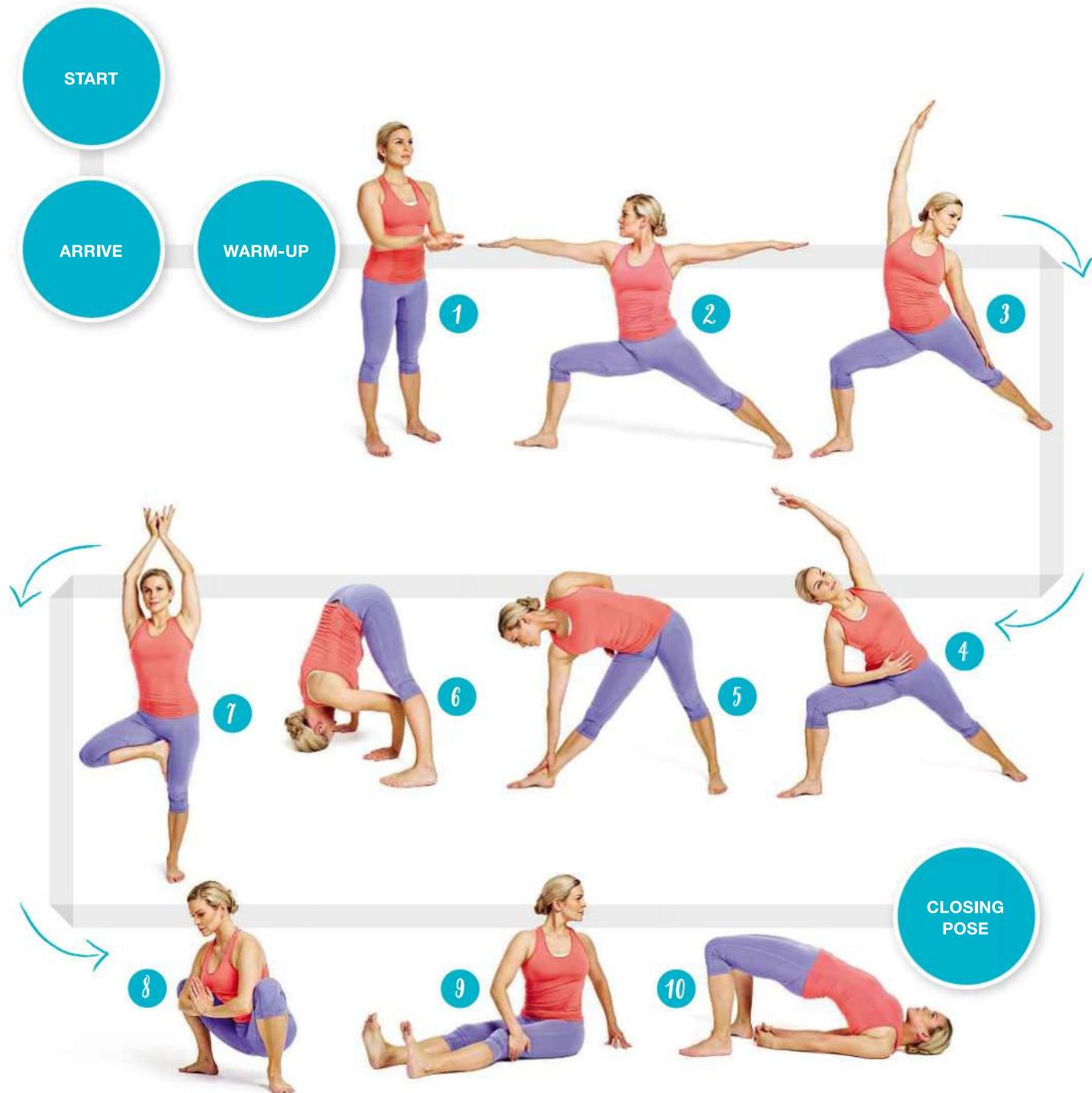
Take your hands to lotus at your heart for a few breaths, before releasing your arms to rest at your sides.



Tip

To help you absorb the effects of this sequence, continue taking your attention down through your legs and feet on each exhale. If you wish, you can pause for a couple of breaths between poses, again 'breathing through your feet', before moving on to the next posture.





EVENING GROUNDING SEQUENCE

The end of the day is a natural time to nurture a gentler, floor-based yoga practice. Staying closer to the earth, as you do in this sequence, gives you the opportunity to build a relationship of trust with the ground that supports you. Use the minimum tension needed to hold the poses, then let your body and mind surrender to stillness. This will offer the possibility for deeper relaxation as well as a greater sense of security in your life.

Arrive

Sit in Accomplished pose (p70) and gently close your eyes. Breathe softly into your belly for a few moments, releasing your thoughts on the out-breath and becoming aware of the ground beneath your sitting bones. When you feel ready, begin the following sequence.

Warm-up

- Happy baby (p37)
- Eye of the needle and Reclining twist (p37)
- Left side first, then right.
- Cat/Cow (p36)
- Moon salute II (p46)
- Optional, one or two rounds.

Poses

- 1 Downward dog splits (p59)
- Raise your right leg, then your left, then immediately go into bent leg splits on your left leg and bring your knee in towards your left hand to lower into...

2 Pigeon (p80)

Take five to 10 breaths here. Tip over to your left buttock, then swing your back leg round to the side and in front of you, to come into...

3 Head to knee (p74)

Take your left hand a foot behind your left buttock, and pivot round into...

4 Side gate (p36)

Lower your right hand and place it a shoulder's distance from your left hand, and pivot round to Downward dog in the opposite direction.

Repeat 1-4 on the other side, finishing in Downward dog in the original direction. Raise your right leg, and step forward into...

6 Shoelace (p76)

Place the sole of your right foot outside your left knee, then wrap your left hand outside your right knee, and take right hand behind your right buttock to come into...

7 Lord of the fishes (p77)

Release your arms and legs. Repeat 6-7 on the other side.

8 Accomplished pose (p70), with breathing practice (see below).

Closing pose

- Reclining butterfly (p113)
- Grounding breath (p29)



1



2



5



4



3



6



7



8



CALM ANXIETY SEQUENCE

Whether you're apprehensive about an exam or an interview or are under pressure to complete more things than you have time for, the effects of acute anxiety are similar. Your mind is likely to be in overdrive, your breathing shallow and your heart rate increased. This sequence begins by soothing your nervous system, then gradually reawakens your connection to strength and openness.

Arrive

- Easy cross-legged pose (p70)

Take a few Abdominal breaths (p25), inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. If necessary, count each breath to lengthen the out-breath until you feel calmer and your heart rate begins to slow down. Then complete the Grounding breath pranayama (p27).

Warm-up

- Easy pose, arms overhead and to the side (p32)
- Easy twist (p33)
- Cat/Cow and Cat sequence (p38)
- Sun salute (p42)

Complete two rounds.

Poses

1 Mountain pose (p50)

Allow your breath to settle, then take five or more long slow breaths, with your eyes closed. Direct your out-breath down your legs and through the soles of your feet. Be aware of your back body. When you feel more centred, inhale to sweep your arms out to the side and overhead. On an exhale, take your arms out to the side, into...

2 Standing forward fold (p52)

Take five or more breaths here, resting your hands on a crosswise bolster if more comfortable. Exhale and step back into...

3 Downward dog with bolster (p58)

Five or more breaths. Walk your hands round to the right into...

4 Wide leg standing forward fold with bolster (p57)

Five or more breaths. Bend your right leg to come into...

5 Extended side angle pose (p61)

Five breaths. Straighten your right leg and lower your right hand to come into...

6 Triangle (p62)

Five breaths. Step your left foot in, place your right hand on the floor/block to come into...

7 Half moon (p63)

Three to five breaths. Lower your left leg, step your foot back out and pivot on your feet to face the opposite direction.

Repeat 5 & 7 on the left.

8 Head to knee pose (p74)

Five to 10 breaths.

Closing pose

- Reclining butterfly (p113)



Tip

Extreme anxiety can sometimes leave you feeling paralysed – unable to move, unable to think. Just the act of getting on your mat can begin to shift things.





INCREASE CONFIDENCE SEQUENCE

It's natural to feel nervous in certain situations but, by being both grounded and open, you can draw on inner reserves that enable you to stay true to yourself, without getting lost in other people's expectations. For this sequence, use the poses to explore your potential strength. Once you begin to experience its qualities, allow the feeling to expand throughout your body.

Warm-up

- **Happy baby (p37)**
- **Reclining hand-to-toe (p37)**
followed by **Lying side twist (p37)**, on the right side, then on the left.
- **Five Tiger/Side stretch/Gate (p36)** on the right side, then five on the left.

Sun salutes

Three Half sun salutes (p41), then two Sun salutes (p42)

Poses

1 Goddess (p69)

Take three lion's breaths, followed by two slow abdominal breaths. Turn your right foot out 90° and your left foot in 15°, to come into...

2 Warrior II (p60)

Five breaths. Step your back foot in slightly and straighten your front leg to come into...

3 Triangle (p62)

Lower your arms and pivot on your feet, taking your block with you, to face the opposite direction and come into...

4 Pyramid (p64)

Walk your hands to your left foot and arc your right hand up and overhead to repeat 2-4 on the left. Rest in Wide leg standing fold (p57) if you need to.

5 Eagle (p68)

Three to five breaths on each side.

6 Tree (p66)

Three to five breaths on each side.

7 Standing hand-to-toe pose (p67)

Three to five breaths on each side.

8 Hero (p71)

One lion's breath to close, then rest your hands on your thighs for a few breaths.

Closing pose

● Relaxation pose (p87)

● Pranayama

If you have the time, perform Bellow's breath (p29) before the relaxation pose.



There are a lot of standing poses in this sequence. If you need a rest at any point, come into Standing forward fold (p52), Wide-legged forward fold (p57) or Child's pose (p78) for a few breaths, then continue with the sequence.

Beginners can practise poses 6 and 7 against a wall. If you're more experienced, you might like to move straight from Tree into Standing hand-to-toe pose, then switch sides.





MORNING ENERGISER

Start the day feeling alert and raring to go, even if you didn't have the best night's sleep, with the help of this invigorating series

Everyone responds differently to a poor night's sleep. Take a few moments in Child's pose to check in with how you're feeling, and adjust your practice accordingly. Work more strongly if you are stiff or groggy and in need of a boost of energy. Move at a slow, gentle pace if you're feeling jangled and sensitive. You may find your energy changes as you progress through the sequence.

Arrive

● Extended child's pose (p78)

Breathe into your back body for a few breaths, then when you feel present in your body, move on to the warm-up.

Warm-up

● Child's pose with hands by your sides, then move to Thread the needle (p35)

● Cat/cow and Cat flow (p38)

Complete three rounds.

● Standing forward fold (p52)

● Moon salute I (p44)

Do two rounds, using Ocean breath (p28). Pause in each pose for a couple of breaths on the first round, then move in a continuous flow on the second.

Poses

1 Mountain pose with Cow pose arms (p50)

Three to five breaths each side.

2-3 Downward dog splits (p59)

'Walk the dog' for a few moments, then do three straight-leg splits, taking your right knee to your right elbow. Repeat on the other side, then return to Downward dog.

Step your right foot between your hands, pivot to your left and walk your hands to your left to come into...

4 Wide-legged standing forward fold (p52)

Take three to five breaths here. Walk your hands back to your right foot, turn your right foot out 90°, back foot in 15° and circle your left arm in a large arc to come into...

5 Warrior II (p60)

Step your left foot forward slightly and lower your right hand to a block or the floor, to come into...

6 Half moon (p63)

Lower your left foot and step back into...

7 Revolving triangle (p65)

Lower your top hand, walk your hands round to your left (pausing in Wide-legged standing forward fold if you need, then repeat 4-7 on the other side. Lower your top hand and step your front foot back to come into...

8 Garland pose (p81)

Roll onto your back, knees to chest, then straighten your left leg to come into...

9 Straight-leg lying twist (p37)

Repeat on the other leg.

Closing pose

Relaxation pose (p87)

Pranayama (p27)

For an extra boost of energy, complete three rounds of Bellows breath.



DESK REFRESH

Don't let a long day at work leave you feeling tense and achey. Take a break and reboot with this energising sequence

Sitting for long hours can lead to stiffened joints, chronic tension and restricted range of motion. This sequence has been designed to do at your desk – simply take off your shoes to let your feet breathe and loosen any restrictive clothing. If possible, open a nearby window too. Take three to five deep abdominal breaths in each pose, unless otherwise stated.

Warm-up

Take your arms overhead and interlace your fingers. Hold the left wrist and do a side stretch to the right; switch sides. Interlace hands behind your back and lift your chest.



Poses

• FOR YOUR HANDS

- a) Star hands: make a fist, then spread your fingers rapidly. Repeat five times.
- b) Flex your wrists on an inhale and extend them on an exhale. Repeat five times.
- c) Five wrist rolls in each direction.



• FOR YOUR FEET

- a) Star toes: clench and spread your toes. Repeat five times.
- b) Flex and extend your ankles. Repeat five times.
- c) Five ankle rolls in each direction.

Finish with a foot massage, using your thumbs to open and spread your sole and toes.



• FOR YOUR SPINE

- a) Seated twist, then repeat on the other side.
- b) Seated backbend.
- c) Half downward dog (p58).





● TO REFRESH YOUR MIND

- a) Seated forward fold (p52).
- b) Rub your palms together briskly until you create heat in your hands, then rest them over your closed eyes for a few breaths.
- c) Three rounds of Half sun salute (p41).



Tip
Take a pair of bluetooth headphones to the office and stream some gentle music while you do your desk-based stretches. It will help you switch off from work and be in a more relaxed frame of mind.



● FOR YOUR SHOULDERS

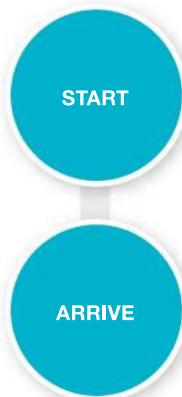
- a) Five elbow circles in each direction.
- b) Cow pose arms, once in each direction (p36).
- c) Eagle arms, once on each side (p68).

PRANAYAMA

Go for a 10-minute walk and breathe in some fresh air – even if you think you haven't got the time. You'll feel much better for it and be more productive in the afternoon, promise!

SWITCH OFF FOR THE DAY

Whether you've spent the day in front of a computer, rushing around after children or chasing impossible deadlines, when 'me time' finally arrives it can be a challenge to let go of a busy mind. Taking time to dissolve unnecessary tension and transition to a more gentle pace can allow you to consciously choose how you want to spend your evening – and in what frame of mind.



Arrive

Spend a few minutes in Legs up the wall (p114) with your feet together or spread wide apart. Close your eyes (you might like to use an eye bag), let your breath soften and deepen, and allow the activity of the day to melt away.

Warm-up

- Extended Child's pose, hands to the right, then the left (p78)
- Thread the needle (p35)
- Cat flow (p38), repeat three times

Moon salute

- Moon salute II (p44)
- Perform one or two rounds.

Poses

1 Cow face pose (p34)

Take three to five breaths each side. Place your hands either side of your knees to transition to Standing forward fold (p52), then stand up and into...

2 Eagle (p68)

Take three to five breaths each side. Turn to face the side of your mat and step your left foot back into...

3 Gratitude flow (p39)

Perform two or three rounds, then pivot on your feet and walk your hands to the left, into...

4-5 Wide-legged forward fold (p57)

Walk your hands to one foot then the other three times, then come back to centre and interlace your fingers behind your back and raise your arms overhead. Pivot on your right foot back to lunge, then step your back foot forward into...

6 Garland (p81)

Take five breaths here.

7 Plough (p84)

Five to 10 breaths. Lift one leg, then the other, into...

8 Shoulder stand (p85) (or Legs up the wall (p114) for beginners)

Stay here for five to 10 breaths.

9 Bridge (p86)

Take three to five breaths here.

Closing pose

Supported relaxation pose (p115)

Breathing practice:

Alternate nostril breathing (p28)

Meditation

To soothe your body even more deeply and prepare it for sleep, when you're ready to go to bed follow the 31/61-point meditation (p126).



 WARM-UP MOON
SALUTE

1



2



5



4



3



8



9

 CLOSING
POSE MEDITATION



INSOMNIA

When you get home in the evening, do the Switch off from the day sequence (p102), so you don't carry all your tension with you through to bedtime. Then, perform this Insomnia sequence when you're ready to go to bed. Set the scene with soft lighting or candles, a lavender essential oil burner and some calming music. If you feel some gentle movement would help you, do one or two rounds of Moon salute II (p46). Flow smoothly and softly through the moves, listening and responding to what your body needs, especially in the spontaneous sections. Breathe evenly and deeply into your abdomen, without forcing, throughout the sequence, and move mindfully between the transitions so you don't disturb the growing sense of relaxation you have created.

Arrive

● Legs up the wall (p114)

Spend as much time as you can here, and check in with how you're feeling.

Moon salute

● Moon salute II, optional (p46)

Poses

1 Restorative child's pose (p116)

Stay here for three minutes.

2 Reclining butterfly (p113)

Stay here for three minutes.

3 Mountain brook (p117)

Stay here for three minutes.

Closing pose

● Supported relaxation pose (117)

Breathing practice

● Alternative nostril breathing (p28)

Meditation

To soothe your body even more deeply and prepare it for sleep, follow the 31/61 point meditation (p126) when you're ready for bed.



MOON
SALUTE



1



CLOSING
POSE



BREATHING
PRACTICE



MEDITATION





BEAT BURNOUT

This nourishing sequence is for those times when you are simply exhausted. While a 10-minute session can reduce the immediate symptoms of stress, if you can give yourself half an hour, the benefits will reach much deeper. As it's likely you've been facing many external demands on your time, this sequence has no timings. Instead, it invites you to begin to reconnect to your own rhythm again. Listen to and trust your body, moving to the next pose when it feels right to do so. As a guide, you can stay up to five minutes in the floor-based poses, shorter in the standing ones and 10 minutes in Supported relaxation pose. The main thing is to relax as much as you are able, and give yourself permission to slow down.

Arrive

1 Legs up the wall (p112)

Stay in the pose long enough to feel your breathing soften, your heart begin to slow down and your thoughts become quiet. Notice your legs begin to feel lighter. Be aware of how you're feeling and simply accept it, rather than trying to change anything.

Poses

2 Restorative child's pose (p116)

3 Downward dog (p58)

4 Wide-legged standing forward fold with bolster (p57)

5 Wide-legged seated forward fold with bolster (p73)

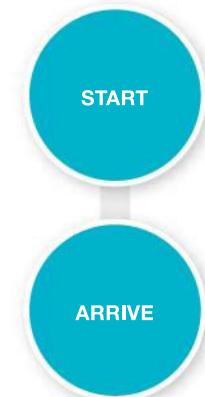
6 Reclining butterfly (p113)

Closing pose

7 Supported relaxation pose (p117)

Tip

To lessen the chance of reaching the point of exhaustion, practise the 'Switch off for the day' sequence (p102) on a regular basis. The grounding sequences and Moon salute II (p46) will also help you rebalance your system before you reach burnout. If you really only have 10 minutes, spend five in Restorative child's pose, followed by five in Reclining butterfly. Alternatively, rest for 10 minutes in Supported relaxation pose.







Restore BODY & MIND

Whether you're juggling what seems like a hundred tasks, you are physically or mentally exhausted or your mind is just too preoccupied to focus, the poses and meditations in this section are just what you need to bring your body and mind back into balance. Anxiety and stress can affect us in surprising ways, from poor digestion to disturbed sleep, irritability and even alarming physical symptoms, such as shortness of breath and heart palpitations. So give yourself a dose of yogic medicine with these relaxing and restoring asanas for a more centred you.

De-stress YOURSELF

Introspective and calming, restorative yoga will help you take the stress out of your life

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I took my first restorative yoga class. The dimly-lit room was a sea of mats surrounded by islands of bolsters and blankets (three or four of each per student), and more blocks, straps and eye bags than I'd ever seen. At the end of the 75-minute session, we'd only done four poses, but I left the studio feeling so relaxed it soon became my favourite class of the week.

Props are used in restorative yoga to support your body so completely you only need to use minimal muscular effort in the postures. That way your muscles don't fire as much, neurological activity is reduced and your brain becomes quieter.

According to Judith Lassiter, one of the key proponents of restorative yoga, when practised regularly the postures help resolve the effects of chronic stress in as

little as five minutes a day. Research shows that deep relaxation – characterised by a slower heart rate, slower rate of breathing, lower blood pressure and slower brain waves – can reduce the effects of high blood pressure and heart disease. While studies on inverted postures, the simplest being Legs up the wall (p112), show a dramatic change in hormone



levels, in turn, reducing brain arousal and blood pressure.

Restorative poses also harmonise the sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous systems, boost the lymphatic system and balance the upward masculine energy, prana, and the downward feminine energy, apana, so you are neither overstimulated or depleted.

To get the most from your sessions, allow yourself to be as fussy as you like. Take time to ensure you're completely comfortable, adjusting your position or getting up to reposition your props if needed. Remember also to cover yourself with a blanket as the poses can be held for longer periods, up to 20 minutes if you have the time.

An eyebag is a useful prop to experiment with too, as light penetrates closed eyelids and can be stimulating when what you're seeking is increased relaxation. Finally, be mindful to come out of each pose slowly and carefully, so you don't disturb the sense of calm you've created.

'Savasana is the best antedote for stress'

BSK Iyengar



Tip

If you'd like to explore yin yoga in more depth, Simon Low and Sarah Powers are both teachers I've worked with. They are particularly good to start with, either in workshops, or via their books or DVDs.



A word on yin

A variety of restorative yoga, yin yoga is the ideal antedote to a hectic or 'yang' lifestyle. It draws on the Chinese concept of yin and yang, where yin is associated with darkness, cold, rest and an inward-looking direction, and yang is brighter, hotter, more active and outward looking.

Most yoga classes work on muscles, 'yang' tissues of the body which, being moist and elastic, respond to frequent, repetitive movements. Yin poses, such as Shoelace (p76) and Reclining mermaid (p115) focus instead on the deeper 'yin' structures — ligament, fascia, joints and even bones. These are drier and less pliable, so need more gentle pressure, over a longer period of time.

Influenced by Chinese medicine, Yin yoga also works on acupuncture energy channels known as meridians. The six major channels of the lower body, all of which begin in the feet, are referred to as the yin meridians, and can bring relief to specific areas as follows:

- **Liver meridian:** lower back pain, irritation anger
- **Gall bladder meridian:** headaches
- **Kidney meridian:** anxiety and fear
- **Urinary bladder meridian:** back pain, headaches, mental problems
- **Spleen meridian:** excessive worry
- **Stomach meridian:** mental distress



LEGS UP THE WALL

PROPS: Bolster, blankets and optional eye bag

- Place the short end of your mat against a wall and a folded blanket at the opposite end, then sit sideways on the mat, close to the wall. Bend your knees and have your feet flat on the floor.
- Resting your palms on the floor behind you, fingertips pointing forwards, use your hands to help you roll onto your back as you simultaneously swing your legs up the wall and rotate your torso so you're lying on the centre of your mat.
- Adjust your position if needed, so your lower back rests comfortably on the mat, and release your arms by your sides.
- Notice the position of your chin, if it is higher than your forehead, place the folded blanket beneath your head and, if using, place the eye bag on your eyes.
- Allow your breath to settle and slow

down, and simply enjoy the sensation of doing nothing. Allow your muscles to become heavy and the tension of the day to melt away.

- Be in the pose for up to five minutes, then bring your knees to your chest, resting here for a few breaths before gently rolling over to your right and using your hands to help you come up to sitting.

Benefits

- Reduces fatigue in the legs
- Quiets the mind
- Improves circulation



Tip

If you find it tiring to hold your legs in place on the wall, maximise your relaxation by using a strap around your calves to do the work for you. Another option is to spread your legs wide against the wall for a deep hip opener, that feels wonderful.



Variation

For a chest opening version of this pose, which refreshes your heart and lungs, try elevated legs up the wall, resting your lower back (not buttocks) on a bolster placed 15-25cm from a wall. Rest your head on a folded blanket and have your arms at your sides or overhead.

RECLINING BUTTERFLY

SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA



PROPS: Bolster, two thick blocks, one thinner block or folded blankets, a strap (optional)

- Place the bolster lengthwise down the centre of your mat, and the thick blocks either side. Balance the thin block or blanket on the far end of the bolster.
- Sit cross-legged with your buttocks against the short edge of the bolster, then draw it towards you so it snuggles into your sacrum. Bring the soles of your feet together and let your knees fall out to the sides, then place a block beneath each knee, so there's no strain on your groin.
- Rest one hand on either side of your buttocks, inhale, then as you exhale, slowly lower your spine onto the bolster, resting your head on the block or blanket so your neck is comfortable. Place your arms out to the sides, palms up.
- Make any minor adjustments you need, so there is no strain on any part

of your body, perhaps adding a thin block or folded blanket beneath your buttocks to lessen the curve of your lower back.

- Gently close your eyes, connect to your breath and surrender your weight to the earth. Rest here for as long as is comfortable for you, up to 10 minutes. Then gently bring your knees together, shift your bottom to the left, let your knees fall to your right and slowly roll your body over to the right, so your back comes off the bolster. Pause here for a moment, before using your hands to gently bring you up to sitting.

Benefits

- Calms the nervous system
- Regulates blood pressure
- Opens the hips and heart area
- Works on the liver, kidney and spleen meridians

Variation

If your feet have a tendency to slip forward, or you feel any strain in your legs or groin, a strap will make the pose more relaxing. Place the centre of an open strap around your lower back, bring the ends forward and let them fall over your thighs and calves. Take one end and loop it under the outside edges of both feet. Tie the strap so the buckle doesn't push into your legs when you lie down.



RESTORATIVE TWIST



PROPS: Bolster and blankets

- Cover your mat with a blanket, then place a bolster lengthwise down the centre and have another folded blanket close by. Snuggle your right buttock into the short end of the bolster, so your right thigh is parallel to it, your knees are bent and feet resting to your left.
- Take a couple of slow, gentle breaths, then inhale to lengthen your spine and, as you exhale, twist to your right and walk your hands forward as you gently fold from your hips to rest the centre of your chest over the bolster.
- Turn your head to face your right and rest your left cheek on the bolster, raising it on a folded blanket if this feels more comfortable for your neck. Draw your shoulder blades down your back to create space around your neck. Relax your arms comfortably on the floor, elbows bent and palms facing down.
- Breathe softly and evenly into your back and side ribs, releasing deeper

into the twist on the exhale, as you surrender to gravity and allow yourself to be fully supported by the bolster.

- After one to two minutes, change sides. Place your hands under your shoulders and inhale as you gently press your hands into the mat to help raise your torso. Swap your knees to the opposite side, so your outer left thigh rests against the bolster, and lower down, this time twisting to your left.
- When you're ready to come out, root through your hands to lift up, then move the bolster to one side and rest in a comfortable seated position for a few breaths.



Tip

To avoid straining your back when you come out of the pose, turn your head to face your knees for one or two breaths, then come up slowly.



Benefits

- Relieves tension in the upper back
- Expands the intercostal muscles to aid breathing
- Calms the mind

RECLINING MERMAID



PROPS: Bolster, block, blanket

- Place a bolster crosswise on the mat, and have a block and folded blanket at the top end of your mat. Snuggle your right buttock close to the bolster, so your right thigh is parallel to it, your knees are bent and feet are resting to your left.
- Place your right hand on the far side of the bolster and gently lower your right side body over it. Lower onto your shoulder and extend your right arm parallel to the bolster, palm facing up.
- Rest the right side of your head on a folded blanket or block, then slide your left leg back so the sole of your right foot gently rests on your left knee. As you inhale, gently extend your left arm overhead and rest it on another block.
- Take a moment to make any adjustments you need to get

comfortable, then softly close your eyes and breathe into your left side. Surrender your weight to the earth on the out-breath and allow yourself to experience a growing stillness.

- Rest here for as long as is comfortable for you, up to five minutes. Then, disturbing yourself as little as possible, bring your knees together and use your top arm to gently bring you up to a comfortable seated position.
- Pause for a moment, before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Opens the body from the ankle to the wrist
- Aids deeper breathing
- Extends spinal ligaments
- Stimulates the gall bladder meridian

SUPPORTED CHILD'S POSE

PROPS: Bolster and blankets, plus a sandbag (optional)

- Cover your mat with a blanket for extra padding, then kneel down with the bolster lengthwise between your thighs and your ankles pointing directly backward. Sit back on your heels and notice how your knees or ankles feel. If you feel any discomfort, try the suggestions in the tip below.
- Take a couple of slow, gentle breaths, then gently fold forward to rest your chest over the bolster. Allow your tailbone to release towards your heels to lengthen your lower back, and place a sandbag over your sacrum to help your muscles relax more deeply.
- Rest your head to one side, raising it on a folded blanket if this feels more comfortable for your neck, then gently draw your chin in towards your chest,

making sure you can breathe easily.

- Wrap your arms around the bolster, or take your hands back towards your hips, whichever feels right for your body in this moment. Draw your shoulders away from your ears to create space around your neck.
- Allow your breathing to settle. Allow your jaw to relax and your belly to soften. Let any tension melt away as you surrender your weight into the bolster. Rest here for up to three minutes, turning your head to face the opposite direction half-way through.
- To come out of the pose, place your hands under your shoulders and inhale as you gently press your hands into the mat to help raise your torso. Move the bolster to one side and rest in a comfortable seated position for a few breaths.



Tip

If your knees or ankles feel uncomfortable, try placing a folded towel onto the back of your knees and a rolled towel beneath the front of your ankles.



SUPPORTED RELAXATION POSE



PROPS: Bolster, blankets, eye bag

- Place a bolster crosswise about a quarter of the way down your mat, and roll one side of a folded blanket at the other end. Have another blanket and an eye bag close by.
- Rather than lean back to lie down, which places a strain on your abdomen, from kneeling, lower down onto your right buttock and place your right hand out to the side. Use your hands and forearms to help you lower down onto your right side, then roll over onto your back.
- Take your arms to your sides, palms facing up, and bring your chin slightly lower than your forehead, to quieten the frontal lobes of your brain. Cover your eyes with an eye bag and your body with a blanket.
- Breathing softly and deeply into your belly, scan your body from head to toe, consciously letting go of any tension on an out-breath. Relax your temples

and release your lower jaw. Lengthen the back of your neck and let go of any tension around your lips. Let your eyeballs sink into your eye sockets, and your eyelids be heavy.

- Continue travelling down your body, letting your muscles melt into your bones and your bones sink into the mat. Let your thoughts recede and your mind become still, resting here for up to 20 minutes.
- When ready to come out of the pose, take your attention to your breath, then gently bring some movement back to your body. Wriggle your fingers and toes, take your arms overhead and stretch from your hands to your feet. Bring the soles of your feet onto the bolster, take your hips to the left and roll over to your right-hand side. Rest in a foetal position for a few breaths, then press your left hand into the floor to help you come up to a sitting position.

Tip
Whenever you feel stressed, treat yourself to this rejuvenating pose. The less time you have, the more likely it is that you need it, and the more beneficial it will be.

Benefits

- Lowers blood pressure and heart rate
- Reduces fatigue
- Improves sleep
- Releases muscular tension

Variation

In Mountain brook pose, your body undulates like water cascading over stones in a gentle flowing stream. It recalibrates your spine and reduces fatigue. Place a bolster under your knees and a rolled blanket beneath your upper ribs. Adjust the height of the blanket to suit what your body needs.





REFRESH AND RESTORE

These calming postures are for those occasions when you have the time to rebalance your nervous system at a deep level. Based on yin and restorative yoga, the sequence lasts around half an hour, and will leave you feeling refreshed and nourished. The poses work by supporting the tissues around your joints so you can relax fully and stimulate the energy channels in your body. Allow your breath to naturally lengthen as you progress through the sequence, and enjoy the sense of stillness you find in the pause periods between the in- and out-breath.

Arrive

● Accomplished pose on bolster (p70)

With one hand on your heart, the other on your belly, allow your breath to settle and your thoughts to become quiet.

Take a couple of moments to check in with how you are feeling.

● Alternate nostril breathing (p28)

Poses

1 Restorative child's pose (p78)

Stay here for three to five minutes.

2 Restorative twist (p114)

Two minutes each side.

3 Reclining mermaid (p115)

Two minutes each side.

4 Mountain brook (p117)

Three to five minutes.

5 Reclining butterfly (p113)

Three to five minutes.

Closing pose

6 Supported relaxation pose (p117)

10 minutes.



If you really are short on time, choose either Supported child's pose, Reclining butterfly or Supported relaxation, and stay in the pose for 10 minutes. Connect with your breathing and lengthen the out-breath. Allow your thoughts to dissolve and your body to melt into the mat on each exhalation. You'll be surprised how different you feel afterwards.





Meditation MATTERS

Meditation is not a chance to doze off at the end of your practice. Known as ‘active relaxation’, it is a central – and essential – part of yoga and can also be done first thing in the morning to set you up for the day. The secret to your meditation practice is little and often rather than a lengthy session from time to time. There are many types of meditation but they all involve switching off the chatter in your head and focusing on something to refresh your mind. That could be gazing at a candle, visualising a favourite place or colour or saying a mantra to yourself. The meditations in this section will help you de-stress, show you how to focus on what you want or need in life and allow you to relax deeply.

Anxiety MEDITATION

If you're experiencing high levels of stress, whether due to an upcoming event or because you're facing a period of uncertainty, this exercise will help you feel calmer and more in control

was introduced to this practice by meditation teacher Sophie Johnson many years ago, and have found it a very reliable way to calm the nervous system and experience a sense of security related to the physical body.

When your energy is largely concentrated in your upper body, it is likely to express as heart palpitations, breathlessness and racing thoughts. This exercise works by increasing your awareness of and connection to your lower body, and draws energy down into your legs and feet, bringing a feeling of stability and strength. You can practise it on a regular basis to feel more grounded in general, but it is also useful to do before an event you're feeling anxious about. Aim to complete the exercise an hour before your event starts, to give time for the effects to work.

HOW TO DO IT

- Stand with your feet slightly apart and take a couple of breaths into your belly. When you are ready to begin, transfer your weight onto your right leg, resting on the ball of your left foot for balance. Rest your attention on the floor beneath your right foot and sense its quality.

Then, bring your awareness to the sole of your right foot. Become aware of any sensations you can feel – pressure perhaps, or maybe a slight throbbing or feeling of heat. Gradually, travel with your awareness into the foot and up your lower leg, as if you were creating a 3D scan – sensing bone, muscle, skin. Continue moving with awareness up to your right knee, thigh and groin.

- Once you reach your pelvis, allow your sensitivity to guide you. You may feel as

the solar plexus area, between your navel and the tip of your breastbone. Be aware of anything that feels different. If you are especially anxious, you may notice strong sensations in this area.

- Once you feel you've connected to the area, retrace the journey back down your left leg to your foot and the ground beneath it. When you've completed this circuit, pause, then repeat it on the right leg, balancing on the ball of the left foot.
- Pause after this circuit, then take your

'This increases your connection to your lower body, bringing a feeling of stability and strength'

if there is an existing pathway to follow, or you may just be aware of the area in general. Move with your awareness to an area about two inches below your navel. Dwell here for a moment or two, noticing any sensations you feel, or, equally important, noting if you don't feel anything. Then, continue travelling up to

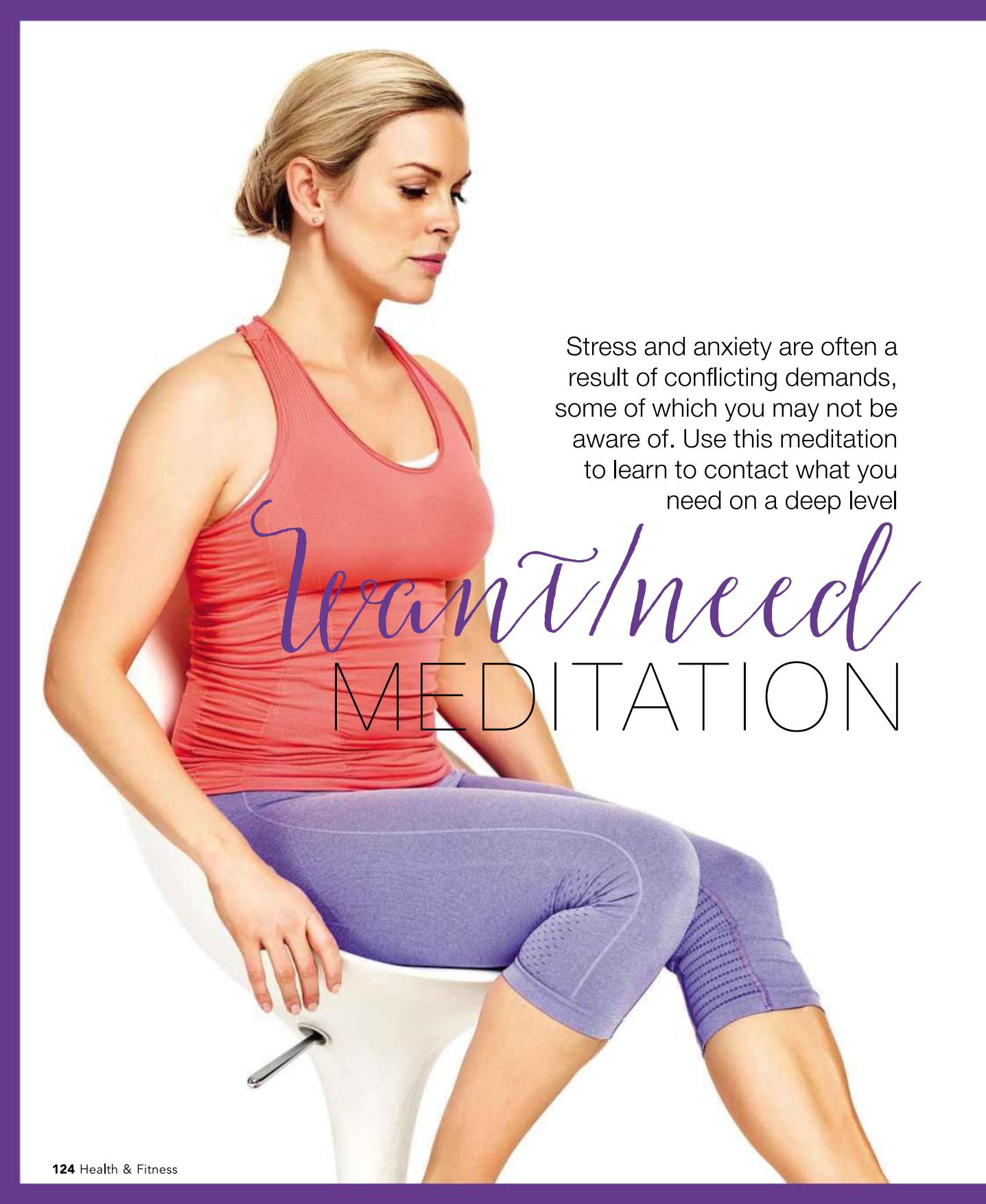
feet hip-distance apart, bend both knees and complete one more round, this time travelling up and down both legs simultaneously.

- When finished, return to Mountain pose (p50) and check in with your body. You may want to rest in Child's pose, or you might like to have a gentle walk.


Tip

Occasionally, you may feel slightly dizzy while doing this exercise, due to having a lot of energy in your upper body. If it feels too much, stop and try the exercise again another day.



A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a red ribbed tank top and purple leggings, sits in a white armchair. She is looking down and to her right with a thoughtful expression. The background is plain white.

Stress and anxiety are often a result of conflicting demands, some of which you may not be aware of. Use this meditation to learn to contact what you need on a deep level

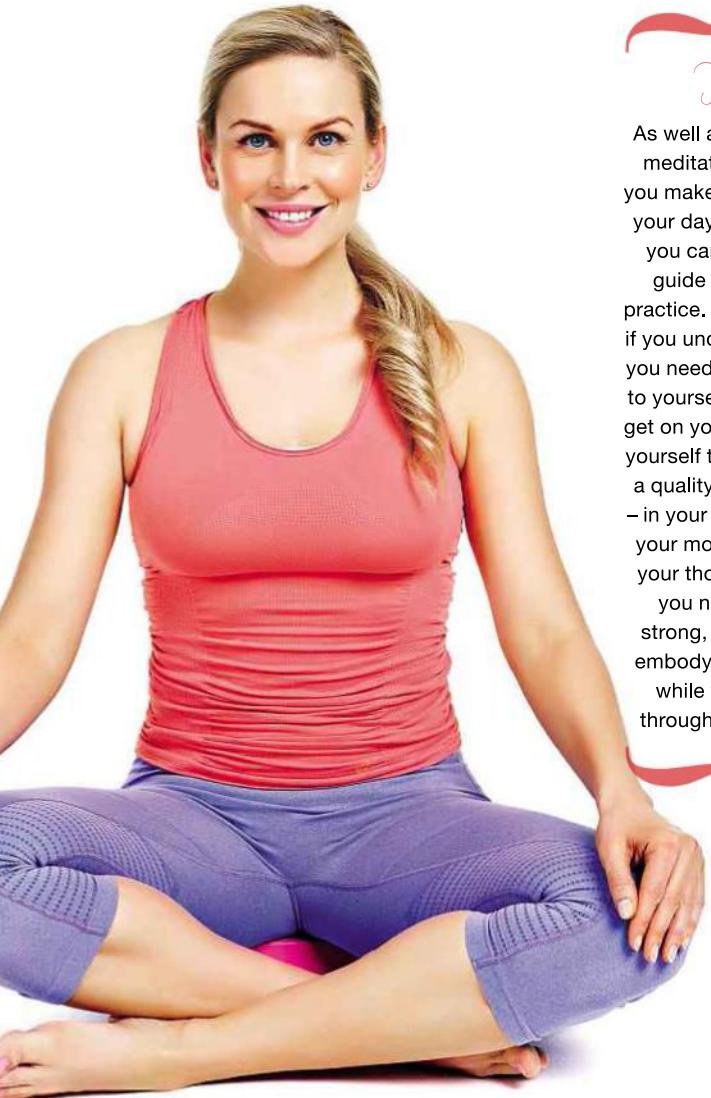
Want/need MEDITATION

This meditation practice can be used in any situation, and teaches you how to differentiate between what it feels like to want something, and what it means to need something. The energy of 'want' feels very different to that of 'need'. Want is fiery, strong, compulsive – like a child throwing a tantrum. Need, on the other hand, is slower, quieter, deeper. It's what nourishes you the most. Outwardly, the noisy child is screaming for ice cream; inwardly, what she may really need is to be held, heard and understood.

What this meditation teaches is how to access that part of your mind that is not ruled by surface emotions. With experience, you may not always need to write your thoughts down afterwards – just tune in to what feels appropriate for you at the time. You may also decide you only want to look at what your needs are. Once you're familiar with the different qualities of want and need, you'll be able to tune in to what you need without doing the meditation.

HOW TO DO IT

- Sit in a comfortable position. It doesn't need to be on your yoga mat. In fact, sitting on a hard backed-chair with your feet firmly on the ground is an ideal way to do this practice.
- Set aside a few moments to arrive in your body. Close your eyes, slow your breath, let go of any unnecessary muscular tension.
- Take your attention to the area a couple of inches below your navel, and direct your breath there. Spend a few minutes building up a sense of the area, noticing if you feel any sensation there. If it helps, you can rest your palms over this point, one above the other, to help you feel a connection.
- When ready, begin to tune in to all the



things you would like in your life. Let your imagination run free – they don't have to be things likely to happen, or even things that could possibly happen. Give yourself permission to be as unrealistic as you like.

- After 10-15 minutes, or when you feel you've exhausted this list, pause a moment, then gently open your eyes and write down all the things you can remember. This will help clear your mind for the next part of the meditation.

- When ready, connect with the navel area again. Allow your breath to be slow and spacious and, this time, ask yourself what you need. Initially, just keep it general, but over time, you can ask specific questions, such as, what do I need today? What do I need in this situation? What do I need to say to my boss/mother/partner?
- Once you've finished, pause to let your mind still, and then write your needs down.



As well as using this meditation to help you make decisions in your day-to-day life, you can also let it guide your yoga practice. For example, if you understand that you need to be kinder to yourself, when you get on your mat, allow yourself to connect to a quality of softness – in your breathing, in your movements, in your thoughts. Or if you need to be strong, let yourself embody that quality while you move through the poses.

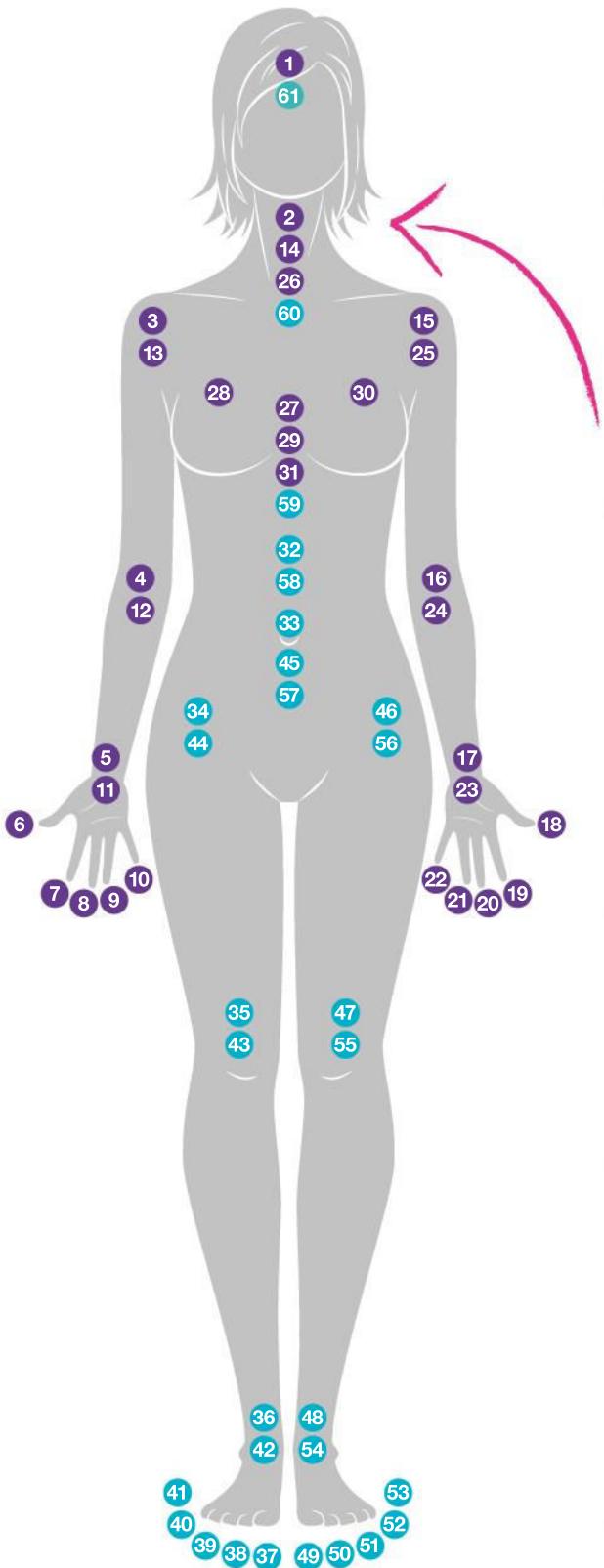


These two sequences focus on the energy centres of the body. Some are major points, such as the third eye centre between the eyebrows, or the heart chakra; others are marmas, points where the three nadis (energy channels) converge. When you are stressed, these energy points can become blocked and restrict the flow of prana. Use this sequence whenever you need to relax deeply.

When you're not familiar with it, this technique requires concentration and sensitivity, so begin with the 31-point relaxation, and when you're able to complete that circuit without drifting off to sleep, move on to the 61-point sequence.

31/61-point RELAXATION

De-stress and enjoy moments of complete letting-go with these two profound meditations focusing on the body's energy centres



31-point relaxation

● Lie in **Supported relaxation pose (p117)**, with a bolster under your knees and a rolled blanket supporting your neck. Close your eyes, and allow your weight to sink into the mat. Surrender to the pull of gravity and let your breath lengthen. Release your jaw and let go of any tension in your belly.

● When ready to begin, let your attention rest on the space between your eyebrows. You may be aware of skin, a particular sensation or something even subtler. Spend a few moments there, building a connection to the area and visualising a blue star. Breathe in and out. Then, become aware of the base of your throat. Sense the area, breathe in and out, connect to the blue star.

● Next, take your attention to your right shoulder, and breathe in and out with the blue star. Travel down to your elbow, breathe in and out, visualising the blue star. Become aware of your right wrist, breathing in and out, with the blue star.

● Take your attention to the tip of your right thumb. Take your attention to the tip of each finger, then back to your wrist and up your arm, following the pattern. Each time breathing in and out, and seeing a blue star with your mind's eye. When you return to the throat, repeat on your left arm, and finish at point 31, the heart centre.

● Take a few moments to observe how your body feels

now, and allow yourself to fully experience it. Stay as long as you like here, then bring your awareness back into the room, by breathing more deeply, wriggling your fingers and toes. Reach your arms overhead and stretch your body from your toes to your fingertips. Roll over to your right-hand side to come up.

● Once you're comfortable with the 31-point relaxation, extend the practice to include all 61 points.

MOON MEDITATION

● Another beautiful practice for the evening, you can do this calming meditation before or after Moon salutations, or whenever you want to enter a quieter state of mind.

Sit comfortably, or stand in **Mountain pose (p50)**, then take your attention to the space between your eyebrows. Visualise a full moon on a clear night sky. See its light reflecting on the waves of the ocean as they shimmer and dance in the midnight blue, sensing how the moonlight penetrates into the water. Be sensitive to any feelings or sensations you experience, perhaps a tingling in your forehead or a growing sense of stillness. Let the image fade as you prepare to begin the Moon salute.

After your practice, pause in **Mountain pose**, reconnect to the image of the moon and ocean until your body is steady, then rest in **Relaxation pose (p87)**.

Directory

Apparel

ACTIVE IN STYLE

activeinstyle.co.uk

ASQUITH

asquithlondon.com

EVERY SECOND

COUNTS

everysecondcounts.co.uk

FROMYOGA

fromclothing.com

LULULEMON

lululemon.co.uk

MANDUKA

manduka.com

MANUKA

manukalife.com

NOBALLS

noballs.co.uk

PURE LIME

purelimeshop.com

STYLE PB

stylepb.com

SWEATY BETTY

sweatybetty.co.uk

WELLICIOUS

wellicious.com

Equipment

GAIAM

gaiam.co.uk

HOLISTIC SILK

holisticsilk.com

MANDUKA

manduka.com

YOGA MATTERS

yogamatters.com

THE MEDITATION CENTRE

meditationcentre.co.uk

THE YOGA SHOP UK

theyogashop.co.uk

Find a teacher

THE BRITISH WHEEL OF YOGA

bwy.org.uk

YOGA ALLIANCE

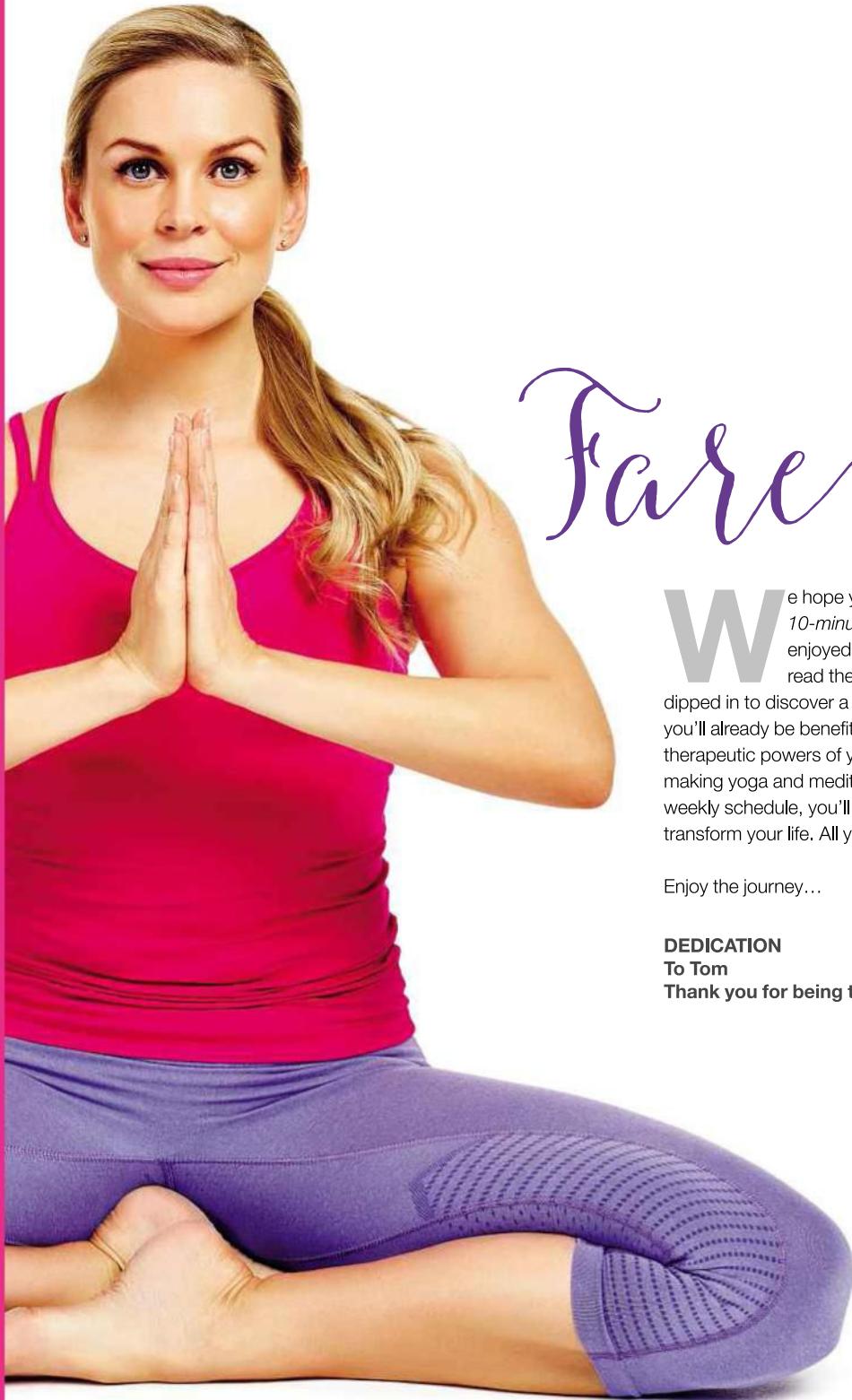
yogaalliance.co.uk

Teacher training

TRIYOGA

tryoga.co.uk





Farewell

We hope you've enjoyed reading *10-minute Yoga Calm* as much as we enjoyed creating it. Whether you've read the book from cover to cover or dipped in to discover a few new poses or sequences, you'll already be benefiting from the powerful therapeutic powers of yoga. Don't stop there. By making yoga and meditation part of your daily or weekly schedule, you'll be amazed at how you can transform your life. All you need is 10 minutes.

Enjoy the journey...

DEDICATION

To Tom
Thank you for being there



THE MEDITATION CENTRE

be still ~ be inspired ~ be free

LEARN TO MEDITATE

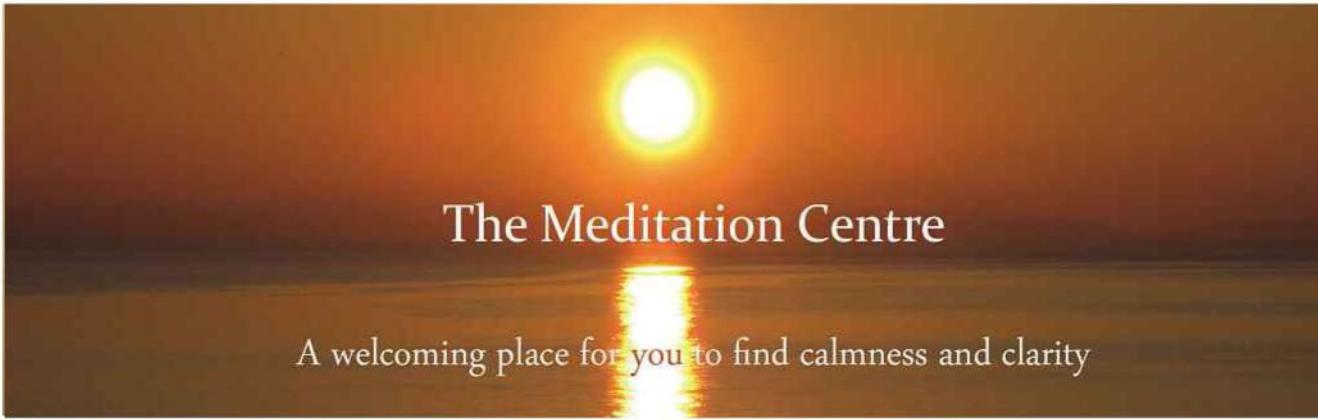
TRAIN AS A MEDITATION TEACHER

The Meditation Centre is a beautiful and inspirational place among the hills and dales of Cumbria. Used for quiet reflection or meditation, the Centre is open to all - irrespective of faith or belief. Day courses and retreats are run throughout the year to help you relax, reflect and renew.

Visit our website for more information: www.meditationcentre.co.uk

E: meditationcentreteam@gmail.com

T: 07582 017396



The Meditation Centre

A welcoming place for you to find calmness and clarity

The Meditation Centre, Dent, Cumbria LA10 5QR

Registered charity no: 1076345