

Yoga stress info

What is Stress?

Stress is a natural reaction that our bodies experience when we face challenges or demands in our lives. It's our body's way of responding to situations that require us to adapt or take action. While a little stress can be motivating and help us perform better, too much stress can be harmful to our overall well-being.

Benefits of Yoga for stress relief

Yoga is a powerful practice that can significantly help in relieving stress. Through a combination of physical postures, deep breathing, and mindfulness, yoga promotes relaxation and reduces the production of stress hormones. This leads to a decrease in anxiety and a greater sense of calm. The gentle stretching and controlled movements in yoga help release tension stored in the body, particularly in areas prone to stress accumulation such as the neck, shoulders, and back.

Additionally, the *mindfulness* aspect of yoga encourages being present at the moment and letting go of worries about the past or future. Regular practice of yoga can improve overall well-being, increase resilience to stress, and provide a *sense of inner peace and balance*.

9 Calming Yoga Poses for Stress Relief

1. Standing Forward Fold (Uttanasana)

Standing Forward Fold, also known as Uttanasana, helps calm the nervous system, soothes the mind by releasing tension in the back and hamstring muscles, and promotes relaxation.

To perform Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold), stand with feet hip-width apart, fold forward

from the hips, and let your upper body hang freely. Relax your head, neck, and shoulders. Hold onto opposite elbows or bring hands to the floor. Breathe deeply and release any tension in the body.

2. Easy Pose (Sukhasana) –

Sukhasana, also known as Easy Pose, is a seated yoga posture that offers stress relief and relaxation. By grounding the body and focusing on the mind, it promotes a sense of calmness and tranquillity. Sukhasana helps release tension from the hips, lower back, and shoulders, allowing for deep relaxation.

To perform Sukhasana (Easy Pose), sit cross-legged on the floor, ensuring your spine is straight. Rest your hands on your knees or in a comfortable position.

3. Head-to-knee pose (Janu Sirsasana) –

Head-to-Knee pose, also known as Janu Sirsasana, helps relieve stress by calming the mind and releasing tension in the back and hamstrings. This forward fold pose promotes relaxation, deep breathing, and introspection, allowing for a sense of calmness and stress reduction.

To practice Janu Sirsasana (Head-to-Knee pose), sit with one leg extended and the other foot against the inner thigh. Inhale, lengthen your spine and exhale as you fold forward over the extended leg. Breathe deeply and hold the pose for a few breaths. Repeat on the other side.

4. Cat-Cow Stretch (Marjaryasana) –

Cat-Cow stretch, a dynamic yoga movement, releases tension in the spine and promotes flexibility. This flowing sequence coordinates breath with movement, calming the mind and creating a sense of relaxation. The gentle undulations of the spine during the Cat-Cow stretch alleviate stress and create a feeling of ease in the body.

To perform the Cat-Cow stretch, start on all fours with hands beneath shoulders and knees beneath hips. Inhale, arch your back, lift your tailbone (Cow pose), then exhale, round your back, and tuck your tailbone (Cat pose). Repeat, flowing with your breath.

5. Child's Pose (Balasana) –

Child's Pose, or Balasana, is a stress-relieving yoga pose that promotes deep relaxation. By gently stretching the back, shoulders, and neck, it releases tension and calms the mind. The child's Pose provides a comforting and nurturing posture, offering a sense of security and tranquility amidst stress and anxiety.

To perform Child's Pose, start on all fours, then sit back on your heels and lower your torso between your thighs. Extend your arms forward or alongside your body and relax your forehead on the mat or a block. Breathe deeply and hold the pose for a few breaths or longer.

6. Legs up the wall (Viparita Karani) –

Legs up the Wall pose, or Viparita Karani, promotes relaxation and calmness by elevating the legs and reversing blood flow in the body. It soothes the nervous system, relieves tension in the legs, and encourages deep relaxation, making it an excellent pose for stress relief.

To practice this asana (Legs up the Wall pose), lie on your back near a wall. Extend your legs up against the wall, keeping your hips close to the wall. Relax your arms by your sides, close your eyes, and breathe deeply, allowing your body to unwind.

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7. Reclining Bound Angle Pose (Supta Baddha Konasana) –

The Reclining Bound Angle pose, also known as Supta Baddha Konasana, is an effective yoga pose that helps release tension in the hips, groin, and lower back while promoting a sense of *calm and relaxation*.

To perform this pose, lie on your back and bring the soles of your feet together, allowing your knees to fall out to the sides. You can place cushions or blocks under your thighs for support. Relax your arms by your sides, close your eyes, and take slow, deep breaths. Allow your body to surrender and find peace in this restful position.

8. Happy Baby (Ananda Balasana) –

The Happy Baby pose, or Ananda Balasana is a stress-relieving yoga pose that releases tension in the hips and lower back. Opening the hips and lengthening the spine, it promotes a sense of relaxation and ease. The Happy Baby pose helps calm the mind and relieve stress accumulated in the body.

To do the *Happy Baby pose*, lie on your back, bend your knees toward your chest, and grab the outsides of your feet. Gently open your knees wider than your torso and pull them toward your armpits. Rock gently from side to side.

9. Corpse Pose (Savasana) –

Savasana, a deeply relaxing yoga pose, helps alleviate stress by promoting mental and physical relaxation. Lying down, consciously releasing the tension, and focusing on the breath and body awareness, cultivates a calm state, allowing stress to dissolve and restoring inner balance.

To do Savasana, lie flat on your back, arms by your sides, palms facing up. Close your eyes, relax your body, and focus on deep, slow breathing. Remain in this restful position for several minutes, allowing yourself to fully relax and let go.

Incorporating these 9 calming yoga asanas into your daily routine can be a powerful tool in managing stress and finding inner peace. Whether it's the gentle stretches, the mindful breathing, or the moments of stillness, each pose offers its unique benefits for stress relief.

Embrace the practice, prioritize self-care, and allow yourself the gift of relaxation and tranquility through these soothing yoga asanas. Start your journey towards a calmer mind and a more balanced life today....

RESTORATIVE BRIDGE POSE

EXTEND YOUR ARMS ON THE FLOOR WITH YOUR FINGER REACHING TOWARD YOUR HEELS, AND YOUR FEET SHOULD BE PARALLEL TO THE FLOOR. MAINTAIN THAT POSITION THROUGHOUT. PRESS DOWN INTO THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET TO LIFT YOUR HIPS OFF THE FLOOR.

SLIDE A YOGA BLOCK UNDER YOUR BACK DIRECTLY UNDER YOUR SACRUM. REST YOUR SACRUM SECURELY ON THE BLOCK. YOUR ARMS CAN STAY OUTSTRETCHED ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO YOUR BODY.

THIS SHOULD BE A COMFORTABLE POSITION. YOU MAY WANT TO STAY HERE FOR SEVERAL MINUTES AS YOUR BODY SETTLES INTO THE STRETCH AND GETS THE BENEFITS OF A PASSIVE BACKBEND. IF THE POSE CAUSES YOUR BACK TO HURT, REMOVE THE BLOCK AND COME DOWN.

TO COME OUT, PRESS DOWN THROUGH YOUR FEET AND LIFT YOUR HIPS AGAIN. SLIDE THE BLOCK OUT FROM UNDER YOUR SACRUM AND GENTLY LOWER YOUR BACK TO THE FLOOR.

FORWARD FOLD

FOR THIS POSE, START OUT FROM DOWNWARD FACING DOG AND STEP FORWARD TO THE TOP OF YOUR MAT. LET YOUR HANDS AND FEET MEET AND REST YOUR HANDS ON A YOGA BLOCK OR THE FLOOR. MAKE SURE YOUR TAILBONE IS LIFTED AND KEEP YOUR KNEES SOFT.

AS YOU INHALE, KEEP YOUR BACK FLAT AND GAZE FORWARD. RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS AND TUCK YOUR CHIN DOWN TOWARD YOUR CHEST.

EXTEND THE CROWN OF YOUR HEAD TOWARD THE FLOOR TO LENGTHEN YOUR SPINE. STRAIGHTEN YOUR LEGS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BY SHIFTING YOUR WEIGHT FORWARD ON YOUR TOES. PLACE YOUR HANDS ON THE GROUND, MAKING SURE YOUR FINGERTIPS ARE LINING UP WITH YOUR TOES. HOLD THIS POSE FOR FIVE BREATHS.

DOWNWARD FACING DOG

THIS POSE HELPS BRING OXYGENATED BLOOD TO YOUR WHOLE BODY, LEAVING YOU FEELING MORE ENERGIZED AND REFRESHED. FROM CHILD'S POSE, KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE FLOOR, SIT UP ON YOUR KNEES, AND THEN PRESS BACK INTO DOWNWARD FACING DOG BY LIFTING YOUR HIPS UP.

SPREAD YOUR FINGERS WIDE AND CREATE A STRAIGHT LINE BETWEEN YOUR MIDDLE FINGERS AND ELBOWS. WORK ON REACHING SIT BONES TO THE SKY, STRAIGHTENING YOUR LEGS, AND THEN LOWERING YOUR HEELS TOWARD THE GROUND. RELAX YOUR HEAD BETWEEN YOUR ARMS AND DIRECT YOUR GAZE THROUGH YOUR LEGS OR UP TOWARD YOUR BELLY BUTTON. HOLD FOR 10 BREATHS.

CORPSE POSE

WITH THIS POSE, YOU CAN REDUCE STRESS AND TENSION WHILE REJUVENATING THE BODY AND MIND. START OUT BY LYING ON YOUR BACK, AND LETTING THE ARMS AND LEGS DROP OPEN. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND TAKE SLOW DEEP BREATHS THROUGH THE NOSE—ALLOW YOUR WHOLE BODY TO BECOME SOFT AND HEAVY. CONSCIOUSLY RELEASE AND RELAX ANY AREAS THAT HAVE TENSION OR TIGHTNESS.

RELEASE ALL CONTROL OF THE BREATH, THE MIND, AND THE BODY. LET YOUR BODY MOVE DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO A STATE OF TOTAL RELAXATION. STAY THIS WAY FOR FIVE TO 15 MINUTES.

CHILD'S POSE

SIT YOUR HIPS BACK TOWARD YOUR HEELS AND STRETCH YOUR ARMS OUT IN FRONT OF YOU. LENGTHEN YOUR NECK AND SPINE BY DRAWING YOUR RIBS AWAY FROM YOUR TAILBONE, AND THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD AWAY FROM YOUR SHOULDERS.

KEEP YOUR ARMS OUT IN FRONT OF YOU AND REST YOUR FOREHEAD ON YOUR MAT OR PILLOW. STAY IN THAT POSITION FOR AT LEAST 10 DEEP BREATHS.

CAT/COW

THIS POSE CAN HELP COUNTERACT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SITTING TOO LONG THROUGH FOCUSED BREATHING AND EXTENSION AND FLEXION OF THE SPINE.

TO START OUT, POSITION YOURSELF ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES, WITH YOUR WRISTS LINED UP UNDER YOUR SHOULDERS, AND YOUR KNEES DIRECTLY BELOW YOUR HIPS. POINT YOUR FINGERTIPS TOWARDS THE TOP OF YOUR MAT. YOUR SHINS AND KNEES SHOULD BE HIP-WIDTH APART. CENTER YOUR HEAD IN A NEUTRAL POSITION AND TURN YOUR GAZE DOWNWARD.

MOVE INTO COW POSE: AS YOU INHALE, DROP YOUR STOMACH TOWARDS THE MAT. LIFT YOUR HEAD, RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS AWAY FROM YOUR EARS, AND LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD.

WHILE EXHALING, COME INTO CAT POSE. DRAW YOUR STOMACH TO YOUR SPINE AND ROUND YOUR BACK TOWARDS THE CEILING. RELEASE YOUR HEAD TOWARD THE FLOOR, BUT DON'T FORCE YOUR CHIN TO YOUR CHEST. IF YOU HAVE A NECK INJURY, KEEP YOUR HEAD IN LINE WITH YOUR TORSO THROUGHOUT THE CAT-COW EXERCISE.

LEGS UP THE WALL

MOVE TOWARDS THE CLOSEST WALL WITH YOUR MAT. POSITION YOURSELF A FEW INCHES AWAY FROM A WALL AND SIT SIDEWAYS. ON THE EXHALE, SWING YOUR HIPS 90 DEGREES TO BRING YOUR LEGS UP THE WALL. ALLOW YOUR SHOULDERS AND HEAD TO REST LIGHTLY ON THE FLOOR, RELAX YOUR ARMS AT YOUR SIDES, AND CLOSE YOUR EYES.

KEEP YOUR LEGS FIRM AGAINST THE WALL, BUT DON'T FORCE ANYTHING IN THIS POSE. IF IT FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE ON YOUR LOWER BACK, YOU CAN PROP YOUR LOWER BACK UP WITH A BLANKET OR MOVE A FEW MORE INCHES AWAY FROM THE WALL.

A Basic How-To For Healing Yoga Poses

Research shows regular yoga practice can effectively reduce chronic pain — addressing both physical aspects and emotional.[1] Even in the short term, studies suggest practicing yoga can help treat pain-related conditions including back pain, arthritis, and migraines. While completing a yoga practice

of more than one pose will likely provide added pain-reducing benefit — including a possible reduction in the stress and anxiety that often comes with acute pain — the following poses are a great start for some of the most common aches.

Ailment: Headache

Pose: Child's Pose (Balasana)

While many poses are known to reduce the tension that causes headaches before they happen, this pose is great when the ache has already sprung. Child's pose just slightly inverts the body for increased blood circulation to the head, helping to relieve tension.

How to: Kneel on the floor, big toes touching, knees at hip-width. Exhale and gently lower the torso between the thighs, resting the forehead to the mat. Rest the arms to the sides of the body (palms up), or extend them in front of the body (palms down) for a great shoulder opener. Rest in this pose for 30 seconds to a few minutes, gently "melting" into the floor with each breath.

Ailment: Upper Back Pain

Pose: Cat-Cow (Marjariasana)

This pose is commonly used at the start of a practice to stretch and gently massage the back and neck muscles. Arching up and down helps relieve tension and increase mobility in the spine.[2] Cat-Cow also helps prepare the spine for more advanced back bends.

How to: Start in a tabletop position with the hands and knees on the floor, the spine neutral. On an inhale, press through the hands to round the spine and gently drop the head for cat pose. Really arch the upper back, lowering chin to chest and gaze toward the bellybutton, for a full stretch. On the exhale, lift the chest, gaze upward, and allow the upper spine to slightly release downward (the tailbone should tip up toward the ceiling) for cow pose. Repeat four to six times, transitioning with each breath.

Ailment: Lower Back Pain

Pose: Legs up the wall (Viparita Karani)

This relaxing and restorative inversion is a great way to end a long day (especially for those who are on their feet all day). Resting the extended legs on a wall gently stretches the hamstrings, relieving pressure in the lower back.

How to: Start in a seated position next to a wall, the feet on the floor in front of you, left side of the body making contact with the wall. Gently lie down on the back then pivot at the hips until the backs of the legs are pressing against the wall, perpendicular to the floor. The legs should be as straight as is comfortable, but if the full extension isn't there just yet, start with a little bend in the knees. Scoot the body as close to the wall as possible (the bottom can make contact). Soften the upper body and allow yourself to sink the weight of the legs into the wall, hands may rest on the belly. Stay in the position for 2-15 minutes, and gently roll to one side before returning to standing. Note: Some people feel more comfortable in this pose with a prop, like a pillow, bolster, or block, underneath the low back and buttocks.

Ailment: Wrist Pain**Pose: Upward Bound Fingers (Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana)**

A 9-5 office job can do a number on the body, especially the wrists with continuous keyboard and mouse use. Practice this one at home or on the job to maintain flexibility in the wrists.

How to: This pose can be practiced seated or standing. Inhale and raise the arms straight in front of the body (perpendicular with the torso). Bend the wrists and interlock the fingers, the thumbs touching one another. Exhale and roll the palms away from the body, keeping the fingers interlocked. If fully extended arms create any discomfort, breathe into the pose while slowly straightening the arms. With another exhale, bring the arms (fingers still bound) overhead so the palms are parallel with the ceiling. Hold the pose for 30 seconds to a few minutes, or with each breath, alternate extending the arms in front of the body and above the body (hands bound throughout).

Ailment: Shoulder Pain**Pose: Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)**

This full body energizer stretches everything from the calves and hamstrings to the back, shoulders, and forearms. You will see downward dog in many styles of yoga, as it is part of the traditional sun salutation sequence.[3]

How to: Start in a tabletop position with the hands shoulder width apart and knees on the floor, the spine neutral. Extend through the arms, lift the knees off the floor, exhale, and press the pelvis toward the ceiling. Gently pedal through each leg — slightly straightening one, bending the other. Press the upper body up and away from the hands throughout the pose, gradually releasing through the upper back. Think about pulling the shoulder blades away from the ears to open through the shoulders and rotating the elbows slightly inward rather than bowing out. Slightly relax the head and neck and gaze toward the navel.

Ailment: Hip Pain**Pose: Happy Baby (Ananda Balasana)**

While it may feel a little silly at first, this calming pose does wonders for the lower back and hips. Great for the end of a practice or even before bed, this pose requires little effort compared to many standing hip-openers.

How to: Lie on the back. On an exhale, bend the knees to the sides of the body. Inhale then grip the outside edges of the feet (elbows inside of the knees). If holding onto the feet directly is uncomfortable, place a strap on each foot to add length. Gently pull the knees down and toward the armpits. Flex the feet and keep the heels stacked over the knees (the lower half of each leg should be fairly perpendicular to the rest of the body). Hold the pose for 30 seconds to a few minutes. Feel free to add some creativity by rocking side to side while bringing the thighs toward the floor.

Ailment: Knee Pain**Pose: Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I)**

While certain yoga poses — such as those in the warrior sequence, for instance — help strengthen the muscles around the knee joint (protecting it from future injury), they may also cause discomfort for those experiencing

knee pain. [4] But with the proper form and a multitude of modifications, standing poses can still be incorporated into a practice to work up that strength.

How to: Begin at the top of the mat. Step the left foot back (about four to five feet behind you). The front foot should point straight ahead, parallel to the mat; the back foot should point to the left corner of the mat, slightly diagonal. Think about dropping the tailbone toward the mat, lowering into the front, bent leg. Scoop the pelvis so the torso becomes more perpendicular placement compared to the mat. On an exhalation, raise the arms overhead. Remember to engage the thigh muscles of both legs and make sure the front knee is above the ankle (try not to let it track forward, backward, inward, or outward) to prevent knee pain.

Ailment: Digestion Pain

Pose: Wind-Relieving Pose (Pawanmuktasana)

As it's name suggests, this pose helps release abdominal gas, which can cause sharp pain and discomfort. Curling the body into a tight ball helps massage the intestines and aid in digestion.[5]

How to: Lie on the back, feet together, arms to the side. With an exhale, bring the right knee toward the chest, gently pulling it toward the body. Inhale and with the next exhale touch the knee to the forehead (if the body doesn't allow the head and knee to make contact, just work toward pressing the leg gently in toward the belly). Take a few deep breaths in this position. Return to start then repeat the movement with the other leg then with both legs together.

With any yoga pose, it's important to work within your own range of limits and abilities. If you have any known medical conditions, have a conversation with your doctor before practicing yoga.