



This practice is designed to help alleviate the symptoms of stress & anxiety. Stress in itself isn't bad, but when we're exposed to it for prolonged periods of time, it can begin to create problems. In this sequence, you'll work specifically on releasing tension, calming the breath and soothing the central nervous system so the body can let go and fully relax. This practice can be done anytime, but is particularly beneficial to do at the end of the day to help prepare the body and mind for a deep and restful sleep. You can combine some or all of these poses in a practice. The final two poses in this sequence are resting and finishing poses, so ideally should be left until the end.

NOTE: the images shown here are for reference only. It may not be possible for you to "look" like the image. Each body has its own set of differences and limitations, so please don't place your focus on trying to reach your toes in a forward bend or feel defeated if you don't think you look like the photo. You don't have to be flexible to practice yoga. Flexibility may come with a consistent practice as your muscles, joints and ligaments lengthen and strengthen over time.



Sukhâsana (easy pose):

Take a comfortable cross-legged seat on the floor, (sit on a cushion if it's more comfortable) and place your right hand over the heart and the left hand on the belly. Breathe into the left hand feeling the belly inflate and relax out. Notice the expansion of the lungs on the inhale and release and relax any tightness or tension on the exhale. Be completely aware of the breath moving in and out of the nostrils. Continue to breathe in this way for as long as comfortable or for a minimum of 5 breaths.

Most of us breathe in our upper respiratory tract creating shallow, quick breaths which in turn activates our sympathetic nervous system responsible for our "fight or flight" response. If we slow down our breathing, especially on the exhale, we can put the brakes on our stress response and create relaxation in the body.

Continuing with the breath, this next technique is called *Brahmari* or bee breathing. It's a method of harmonising and calming the mind and directing awareness inward. Take a deep breath in through the nose, then make an audible but soft humming sound on the exhalation. The lips remain closed on the exhale and the sound should resonate and vibrate in the skull like a buzzing bee. Repeat for 3-5 rounds. **Benefits:** reduces cerebral tension, anger, anxiety and insomnia and lowers blood pressure.



Baddhakonâsana (bound angle pose):

From your seated position, bring the soles of the feet together and extend the heels of the feet away from you until they create the form of a diamond. Fold your torso forward rounding the spine and take the ankles with your hands allowing the elbows to bend and rest on the inside of the knees. Drop the chin to the chest and release the head completely. Close your eyes, withdraw your attention inward, relax into the pose and expand the breath into the back of the body. Stay here for a minimum of 5 breaths allowing your body to release and yield. **Benefits:** stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys, stimulates the heart and improves general circulation, stretches the inner thighs, groins and knees, helps relieve mild depression, anxiety and fatigue and soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica.



Janu Sirsâsana (head to knee forward fold):

From Diamond pose, sit upright through the body and extend both legs out in front of you. Keep the left leg extended drawing the toes up to the sky and bend the right leg out to the side (as in previous pose), pressing the sole of the right foot into the inner left thigh. On your next inhalation, raise the arms to the sky staying as upright through the torso as possible and on the exhale fold the torso over the left leg. Allow your hands to extend either to the foot, ankle or shin bone (depending on your flexibility). Lower your head down toward the left knee and hold the pose for 5 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Paschimottanâsana (seated forward fold):

Sit upright through the body extending both legs out in front of you, gently roll the legs, inner edges of the heels and big toes inward flexing the toes upward and engaging the legs fully. On your next inhalation, raise the arms to the sky staying as upright through the torso as possible, and on the exhale, slowly fold your upper body forward over the legs taking the hands to the feet, ankles or shin bones. Hold for 5 breaths and concentrate your awareness into the back of the lungs and heart. **Benefits:** This pose encourages introspection as you look down and in towards the heart space and creates a deep stretch for the whole back fascia of the body. If your hamstrings feel tight while folding forward, gently bend your knees up and hug the backs of the legs with your arms for a more therapeutic approach.

Balāsana (child's pose):

From Paschimottanāsana, swing your legs behind you and sit on top of your heels. Fold your body forward until the forehead gently rests on the ground beneath you. Allow the arms to relax by your side (palms facing upward) and your shoulder heads to roll down, completely relaxing as you hold the pose for as long as comfortable or for a minimum of 5 breaths. This pose replicates the primary curve of the unborn child and is a wonderful opportunity to consciously breathe into the back of the body. **Benefits:** gently stretches the hips, thighs and ankles, calms the brain and relieves stress and fatigue.

**Adho Mukha Svanāsana (downward facing dog):**

From child's pose, push up onto all fours (or tabletop position), tuck the toes under and lift up into downward facing dog. Lift the sit bones toward the sky tilting the pelvis upward and press the heels down to the floor to stretch the hamstrings. Relax the head down and press firmly through the palms of the hands drawing the arms toward each other to stabilise the shoulder girdle and to extend and lengthen the spine. Take 5 breaths. **Benefits:** calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression, energises the body, stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches and hands, strengthens the arms and legs, improves digestion, relieves headache, back pain, insomnia, and fatigue. Take baby steps as you walk the feet toward the hands to create the next pose, Uttanāsana.

**Uttanāsana (standing forward fold):**

Allow the upper body to fold over the lower body, release the head completely and let go of any muscle activation in the arms so they hang heavily toward the floor. The feet can separate to hip distance apart for a little more stability. Observe where you're placing the weight of your body on your feet. You may be favouring either the ball of the foot or the heel of the foot, so try and evenly distribute the weight of the body throughout the whole sole of the foot and place your hips directly above your ankles. If the hamstrings or lower back feels tight, bend the knees a little. Stay here for a minimum of 5 breaths. Then slowly roll the body up to standing, stacking each vertebra on top of each other and bringing the head up last. **Benefits:** calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression, stimulates the liver and kidneys, stretches the hamstrings, calves and hips, strengthens the thighs and knees, improves digestion, helps relieve the symptoms of menopause, reduces fatigue and anxiety, relieves headaches and insomnia, therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, infertility, osteoporosis, and sinusitis.





Tadâsana (mountain pose):

Feel the ground beneath your feet, allowing the weight of the body to evenly distribute throughout the soles of the feet. Roll the shoulder heads gently back, open the chest, relax the arms by the side of the body and lengthen the spine reaching the crown of the head up to fill the space above the head. Take on the attributes of a mountain; stability, stillness, strength and steadfastness. Hold for a minimum of 5 breaths (or for as long as comfortable) with the eyes closed. If you prefer, you can look down holding your gaze fixed at one point. **Benefits:** improves posture, strengthens thighs, knees and ankles.



Viparita Karani (legs up the wall pose):

Sit down on the floor facing side on to a wall (press one hip into the wall). Slowly, ease your way down to lie on your back while simultaneously lifting your legs up onto the wall. Close your eyes and allow your arms to rest by the side of your body with the palms facing upward or over your heart or on your belly. Breathe slowly and softly and hold the pose for 5-minutes. **Benefits:** calms the mind, relieves tired or cramped legs, relieves mild backache, gently stretches the back of the legs, front torso and the back of the neck.

Savâsana (corpse pose):

From the previous position, bend your knees into the chest and begin to move away from the wall until your body is lying completely straight on the floor (see image below). Allow your legs and arms to relax fully and your eyes to gently close. Turn your palms to face up and allow every muscle in your body to release. Feel your body connect with the earth beneath you. Scan your body and notice the places of tension, discomfort and holding. Approach these places with love, extending appreciation to your body for its efforts, for its strengths and for the challenges it faces. Let your breath, your kindness and attention spread throughout each part of your body. Try not to fall asleep, but stay with the sensations of your body as they become more subtle and as the breath ceases to be an effort. Let your eyes rest back into your skull, release your lower jaw and turn your senses inward. Take rest for 5-10 minutes or for as long as is comfortable. Savâsana allows the central nervous system to absorb the practice and resets your body to either begin or end the day.

