

# Desk Yoga

*Relieve those tight shoulders and stiff necks causing stress headaches. Release your lower back and hips to prevent back ache. Learn some breathing techniques to revitalise you and improve your energy levels.*

## Neck Stretch

*This stretch is particularly good for a stiff or compressed neck. You can really feel how it lengthens and stretches the neck, creating space between each of the vertebrae in the cervical spine.*

Sit upright without letting your back touch the back of the chair. Align your head directly over your spine and feel the crown of your head lifting. You may want to hold on to the side of your chair seat with your left hand. Breathe in, and on the exhalation, drop your right ear toward your right shoulder without lifting your right shoulder or turning your head. Take several breaths in and out, feeling the stretch on the left side of your neck. To create a deeper stretch, reach over your head and place your right hand on the left side of your head to gently pull your neck away from your shoulders. At the same time, you can hold firmly onto the chair with your left hand to draw your left shoulder away from your neck. Visualize your neck lengthening and the muscles along your vertebrae relaxing. Hold the pose for at least five more breaths, then release your left hand from the chair and gently massage your neck and shoulders with your left hand. Slowly lift the head and switch sides to repeat the sequence.



## Stretch your spine

*To reduce tension in the spine, open the shoulders and give your brain a boost of fresh oxygenated blood!*

Begin by sitting on the edge of a chair with your feet placed squarely on the floor about hip distance apart. Place your palms flat on your thighs, and feel length in your spine—head balanced over heart, heart balanced over hips. Inhale and exhale evenly for five counts each. Repeat as many times as you'd like. Inhale and lift your arms overhead, taking hold of your left wrist with your right hand. On an exhalation, bend to the right. Stay there for three breaths. As you inhale, come back up to vertical and change wrists. Exhale, and bend to the left. Stay there for three breaths. Inhale back up to a tall spine. Exhale, release your arms. Circle your shoulders a few times, rolling them up, back and down. As you exhale, place your hands on your knees and round your spine. Tuck your pelvis and pull your navel away from your knees, tucking your chin to your chest and rounding your spine. Breathe deeply and feel the broadness of the back body. Let your head dangle to open the back of the neck. As you inhale open your shoulders up to make an arch in your back and allow your head to look up at the ceiling and drop your head back to stretch the front of the throat – repeat the exhale and inhale movements several times to stretch your spine. Then slowly begin to fold forward, letting your upper body fall through your thighs. You may be able to reach the floor with your palms flat. Otherwise, try to hold onto your ankles or shins. The idea is to let your head drop lower than your hips—this is an inversion and the blood going to your head will boost your brain energy and revitalise you. Slowly roll up and find length in your spine.



## Shoulder stretch

Done sitting or standing, this is great for stiff shoulders and necks.



1. Sit on the edge of your chair, feet parallel, flat on the floor and about a foot apart. Lift out of sitting bones. Feel as though you are trying to press the small of your back against the wall behind you; your shoulders are relaxed and down, the back of your neck long. (Imagine you are pressing the back of your neck against the wall behind you. Your chin will drop a fraction and the crown of your head will be the tallest point.

2. Take your left hand behind your back, palms outwards. Encourage it as high up between your shoulder blades as you can (use your other arm to help it up). Keep your left shoulder back and down.



3. Breathe in and raise your right hand up to the ceiling. Then relax all of your right side on the out breath.

4. Breathe in and begin to stretch through the right side of your waist, your armpit, elbow, wrist, fingers. Stretch towards the ceiling.



5. Breathe out and drop your right hand down behind you to clasp hold of the waiting left fingers. Keep shoulders and elbows back.

6. Hold for two breaths, unclasp hands and repeat on the opposite side.



## **Chair Twist**

*Opens up the spine and releases tension – great for the digestion and reboosting you emotionally if you are feeling a little wound up! Twists are the antidote to sitting for long periods of time. After twisting, you will feel the release of all the muscles in your back (particularly in the middle back) that have been locked into position from sitting a long time.*

Sit toward the front of a chair, and then swivel your thighs toward the right side of the chair so you are sitting diagonally on the seat. If you have an arm rest on the side of the chair, bring your thighs as close to it as possible. Inhale and lift your right arm up to the ceiling. With an exhalation, move your arm to the back of the chair on the opposite side, taking hold of the chair back. Bring the left hand to the right knee or chair handle. Inhale and lengthen your spine. Exhale and twist to the right, pressing your right hand against the back of the chair to deepen the twist. Visualize the shoulder blades dropping down as if they were hanging from weights. Breathe into your rib cage. Consciously relax the muscles in your back and gently twist a little farther. Stay in the pose for 10 to 15 breaths. Return to your centre with an exhalation and repeat on the opposite side.



## **Lower back and shoulder release**

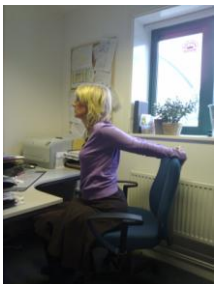


Stand with your feet hip-width apart and parallel. Bend your knees enough so you can hinge forward at your hips and rest your torso on your thighs. Let your collarbones and shoulder blades slide over the ribs, much as in the Arm-Across-Chest Stretch. Relax the muscles along your spine too, and wait patiently for them to release. When you roll up to an upright position, you should feel both lighter and more grounded.

## **Open Chest Stretch**

*This pose opens the chest, decreasing rounded shoulders and releasing tightness in the middle back. In addition, it helps decrease kyphosis, extreme forward curvature of the thoracic spine.*

Sit near the edge of a chair and interlace your fingers behind you, with your palms facing your back. Leaning slightly forward, lift your arms and rest them on the back of the chair. Inhale and lift your chest. Exhale and relax your shoulders away from your ears. If your hands do not reach the top of the chair, clasp the sides of the chair back and pull your chest forward, relaxing your shoulders and opening your upper chest. Hold for 10 to 15 breaths, feeling lightness in your heart. With an exhalation, slowly release your hands and bring them down by your sides.



## Hip stretch

*Good for releasing a tight lower back as well as releasing a lower back ache and preventing or treating sciatica*

Sit on your chair slightly perched on the front edge with your spine tall.

Bring your left foot up and place it on top of your right thigh, just above the knee with the left foot flexed and the foot outside the edge of the right leg. Place your hands onto the inside of your left knee and take a deep breath in and lengthen your spine. As you breathe out deeply and slowly gently press firmly on the left inside of the knee to lower the knee down until it is level with the other one. Continue the deep breathing until you can fold forward enough from your waist to get your hands flat on the floor – drop your head and breath deeply and the hands will get there eventually. Feel a deep stretching your left buttock and hip. Repeat on the right side and be interested to see if this side is tighter – it may be and if so spend longer on the tighter side.



## BREATHING EXERCISE

*To re-energise you and release stress and tension.*

Why bother to do breathing exercises – I can breathe perfectly fine thanks!

The vast majority of the population breathe by using only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of their lung capacity (without realising it they only use the top part of their lungs). If we can learn to open our breath more fully and utilise all of our lung capacity it makes sense that we will get more oxygen into every cell in our bodies. If we learn to breathe deeply & completely it has long lasting effects on the body – it massages the heart, spine, internal organs, improves circulation, lowers blood pressure & more! From a yoga perspective your “breath” is more than just the oxygen uptake into your cells – it is your whole “life-force”. It is breathing in “prana” or “energy” – what makes us, every living thing on the earth and the universe exist at all. If that is just too scary for you then, don't worry – just start off with dealing with the fact that you want to increase your energy levels and calm your frantic inner voice with the knock-on effect of reducing your stress levels – that in a nutshell is what Pranayama/Yoga Breathing will do for you!



### **Full Yoga Breath**

If you watch a baby breathe you will notice that their tummies gently rise as they breathe in deeply and fall as they breathe out. Somewhere along the way, we lose this and most of us now breathe the wrong way round. We are told to breathe in and pull our tummies in and as we breathe out we let it all hang out! If you think of the Full Yoga Breath as being the air entering and leaving a balloon, you will soon get the hang of it.

It is very important to breathe through your nose and not your mouth

(Why? - because the nasal passages filter and clean the air and get it to the right temperature.)

***As you breathe in try and fill your lungs from the bottom up – let your tummy gently rise and imagine your lungs are that balloon and you are trying to get as much air into them as possible. Imagine the lungs in 3 sections – Bottom (abdomen- gently rises) Middle (rib cage- expands outwards) Top (chest- gently rises) try and fill to maximum all 3 of those sections, from the base upwards. When you are ready to breathe out then do the reverse – begin by expelling the air from the bottom of your lungs and use your stomach muscles to help you – let them pull inwards and upwards as the air leaves from the bottom of the lung, let the ribs come inwards and let the top of the chest fall. (Try if you can to not involve the shoulders in the process.) By using your abdomen in this way you will gain control over your stomach muscles and strengthen them immensely. Focus completely on letting your out breath lengthen, soften and extend each time. This will have the effect of relaxing you and your in-breath will then increase as a result and you will take in more oxygen.***

*"the more relaxed and calm you are, the more energy and vitality you will have"*

For more details or to try your first class FREE in Introduction to Yoga, please contact

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