



Yoga for Anxiety and Emotional Regulation

Here are a few short practices that have been helpful for people who are experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, and emotional overwhelm. They are intended to calm the body's response to stress and return the mind to a calmer state of present moment awareness.

Why I Practice Yoga?

"Learning how to take a few really deep breaths when I start to feel anxious or stressed has changed everything, I can now calm myself down before panic attacks."

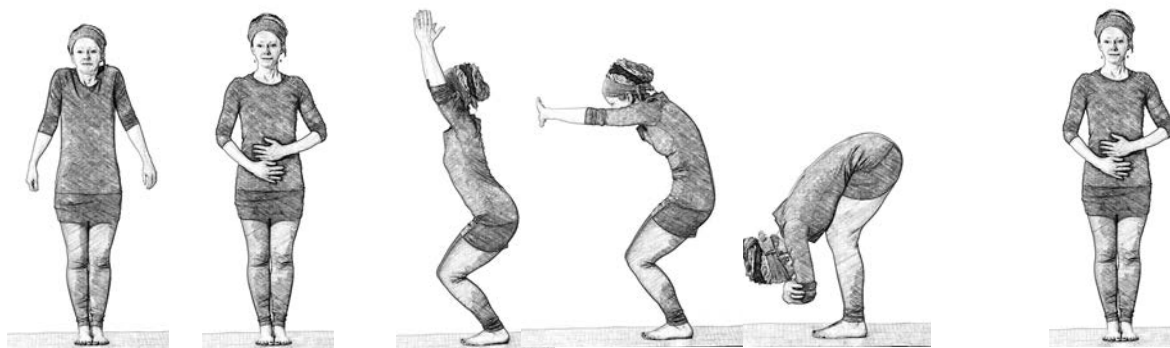
M.K

"I don't obsess as bad as I did before. I feel as if I'm more on an even keel and better able to brush things off rather than trippin."

J.M.

How Yoga Can Reduce Anxiety?

At the roots of anxiety are emotional overwhelm and feeling out of control. Yoga and mindfulness practices can help to calm ourselves when we feel overwhelmed and unable to handle situations. We can discharge stress and anxiety by practicing certain physical poses and by breathing consciously. When we sense a threat, our bodies react to protect us. This is our "Flight or Fight" response. But often times we're not really in immediate danger, but instead it is our habitual response to accumulated stress. These practices strengthen the calming part of our nervous system the same way you can strengthen a muscle - with practice. So the more you do them the stronger you can become at handling stress, anxiety and adversity.



1. Shoulder Rolls

Standing, lift your shoulders to your ears as you inhale, then roll the shoulders backward and down with a long exhale out your mouth. Do this 5-10 times. Then stop, and standing still with you hands on your belly, take 10 full breaths. Feel your belly rising and falling under your hands as you breathe. Try inhaling through your nose and exhaling longer out your mouth whispering a *haaa* sound (like fogging up a mirror with your breath).

2. Chair Pose

With feet hip distance apart, bend your legs and raise your arms. Stay for as long as you can to tire out the leg muscles. Try pushing your hands forward slowly as you exhale, engaging the arm muscles. Then fold forward with knees bent, hands on elbows or released. Take 5 long exhales. Do this pose 3 times.

3. Relaxed Belly Breath

Feel the movement of the breath in your belly and the warmth from your hands. Feel the connection of your feet to the ground. You can rock slightly forward and back to activate feeling in the feet. Imagine that you are inhaling from the ground into your belly and exhaling back down to the ground. Take 10 full breaths. Try to empty your lungs as you exhale. Then shake things off. Shake your legs, your arms, your hands, your shoulders, create big movements. Make any sounds that feel natural to release tension in your body.



4. Balance

Practice 4, 5 & 6 together

Lift one knee up as high as you can. Try to raise your arms overhead. If you need to you can support yourself by leaning slightly against a wall, or placing a hand on it. Take 5-10 slow breaths on each side.



5. Warrior 1

Step back with the same leg that was lifted, feet hip width apart. Bend the front knee, back heel can be lifted. Feel your feet connected to the floor. Imagine you are drawing your breath up from the ground, and sending it back. Stay 10 slow breaths.



6. Forward Fold

Fold forward keeping your legs bent. Relax your neck, face and shoulders. Stay for 5-10 breaths, long exhales making the *haaa* sound. Repeat 4, 5 & 6 on the other leg



7. Relaxed Belly Breath

Feel the movement of your belly breathing and the warmth in your hands. Try inhaling through your nose then exhaling longer whispering the *haaa* sound 5-10 breaths.



8. Star Pose

Place the soles of your feet together allowing the knees to fall out to the sides. Slowly begin to fold forward until you reach your limit. Rest your chin on your chest. If you have pain in your knees stretch your legs out but keep them bent. Deepen your breathing. Feel your inhale moving into your back and belly, then exhale slowly and completely. Try doing this for 10 breaths.



9. Chest opener

Place your hands behind the back, lift your chest as high as comfortable. Count 5 slow breathing into the centre of your chest.



10. Reclining Twist

Lying on your back, bend your right leg (knee over your waist) and move it over to the left. Keep your upper back against the floor and reach your right arm out to the right. You can look up or turn your head to the right. Take 10 full breaths feeling your ribcage expand. Then switch to the other side. When done, draw your knees into your chest, maybe rocking side/side or making small circles with your knees to release tension in your lower back.



11. Relaxation

Find a comfortable position lying on your back and completely relax your body. Release the weight of your arms and legs. Inhale and tense your right arm, exhale release. Continue doing the same with your left arm, then right leg, and left leg. Then tense and release both arms, then both legs. And finally tense your entire body, and as you exhale completely relax.

12. Closing - Deep Relaxation Breathing

Continuing lying on your back, eyes can be closed if that feels OK. See if you can relax your whole body and feel the weight of it sinking into the place where you are lying, particularly as you exhale. As you relax, just let your body breathe itself without controlling your inhale and exhale. Then focusing on your exhale, let it be long and breathe out completely. On your next breath, at the end of your exhale, pause to the count of 3 before inhaling deeply and repeating four more times. If it feels comfortable increase your pause to a 5 count and repeat five times. If thoughts arise, see if you can let them go and concentrate on relaxing as you extend your exhale. If for any reason this feels uncomfortable just relax and let your body breathe how it wants. Stay here as long as you wish. You may naturally fall asleep.

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