



# 10 Simple Stretching & Mindful Breathing Breaks for Trauma



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## 10 Simple Stretching & Mindful Breathing Breaks for Trauma To Use with Clients & Patients



- ❖ Help reduce stress and pain
- ❖ Reconnect with your body
- ❖ Practice balance and build strength
- ❖ Improve general wellness

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C. Breaks	4-55
1. Reduce Tension: Seated Cat/Cow & Feel the Breath (5 minutes)	
2. Reduce Shoulder Stress: Eagle & Sun Breaths (4 minutes)	
3. Grounding: Seated Twist, Side Stretch & Feel the Breath (7 minutes)	
4. Breathe to Calm: "Get Unstuck Breathing" (5 minutes)	
5. Reduce Shoulder & Back Tension: Shoulder Rolls and Goal Post Breathing (5 minutes)	
6. Energizing: Standing Full Body Stretch & Feel the Breath (4 minutes)	
7. Energizing: Standing Side Stretch & Fist Breathing (6 minutes)	
8. Balance and Focus: Tree Pose & Fist Breathing (6 minutes)	
9. Reduce Stress Anywhere: 1-Minute Breathing (1 minute)	
10. Self-care: 10-min Guided Relaxation (MP3 and MP4 only)	
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Please check with your health care provider if you have any questions  
about your ability to do these simple stretching breaks.

[www.greentreeyoga.org](http://www.greentreeyoga.org) Share the "FREE" link.

### Which breaks should I share?

There are breaks that energize and breaks that calm. All 10 breaks help people reconnect to bodily sensations and practice self-regulating.

### Does doing just one break have benefit?

Yes. Even a 5-part breath (1-minute) with long exhalations can lower heart rate, lower blood pressure, and calm the body. Do a longer break for more benefits. And remember, the more you practice, the more natural it feels.

### Does it matter how you breathe?

Yes. How you breathe regulates your nervous system. Long inhalations are energizing. Long exhalations reduce stress. Teaching people to control their breathing patterns teaches them to self-regulate and deal with bodily sensations – an empowering tool for healing trauma.

### Does it matter if I use the phrases on the flip chart?

Yes. Using the phrases on the flip chart will make the breaks trauma-informed and therefore more effective in healing.

- ❖ Be invitational. Use such phrases as: “If you like” and “As you are ready”.

- ❖ Give permission.

Suggest that people find a comfortable way to move today. Give permission to move slowly so they have time to notice how the stretch feels.

Use such phrases as: “Only move in a comfortable way” or “Even small movements have benefit.”

### Can I just tell my clients/patients what to do?

No. It is much more effective to do the breaks with your clients or patients.

Being directed and then being watched can be uncomfortable and a trigger. Remember, doing a break with them will decrease your stress levels as well.

### Why are there 3 formats?

Different formats of the same 10 breaks allow you to choose a format that fits changing needs for self-care and of your clients and patients.

Part 1: Self-Care Flip Chart for Health Care Providers

Part 2: Flip Chart (English/1 of 6 language choices) to use with Clients/Patients

(English only or English/Arabic, Swahili, Somali, Spanish, Kinyarwanda, or Nepali) (this flip chart)

Part 3: Narrated Yoga Breaks (MP4 and MP3)



Questions? [greentreeyoga@comcast.net](mailto:greentreeyoga@comcast.net) or call Yael Calhoun at 801-656-7885

## Ideas to Create Longer Breaks

To Energize (depression)	To Calm (anxiety)	Calm & then Energize	Energize & then Calm
#6 and #7 (11 minutes)	#2 and #3 (12 minutes)	#3 and #6 (11 minutes)	#7 and #1 (12 minutes)
#8 and #6 (10 minutes)	#1 and #9 (7 minutes)	#1 and #7 (12 minutes)	#6 and #3 (12 minutes)
#8 and #7 (14 minutes)	#1 and #4 (11 minutes)	#8 and #7 (14 minutes)  #2 and #6 (8 minutes)	#7 and #4 (12 minutes) <hr/> #6 and #8 (10 minutes)
	#1 and #10 (15 minutes)	#4 and #7 (12 minutes)	#6 and #2 (8 minutes)

Create you own combinations to meet the needs of your day.

(CLIENT/PATIENT VIEW)



#### 4. Breathe to Calm: “Get Unstuck” (1) Fist Breathing



**When you are ready, sit tall.**

**Gently move one shoulder back.**

**Then, move the other shoulder back.**

**Eyes open or closed, your choice.**



**When you breathe in, make strong fists.**

**On a long breath out, fists release.**

**If you like, do this 4 more times.**

**(YOUR VIEW)**



## (2) Fingertip Breathing

4B



**When you are ready, press your fingertips as if your hands are around a ball.**

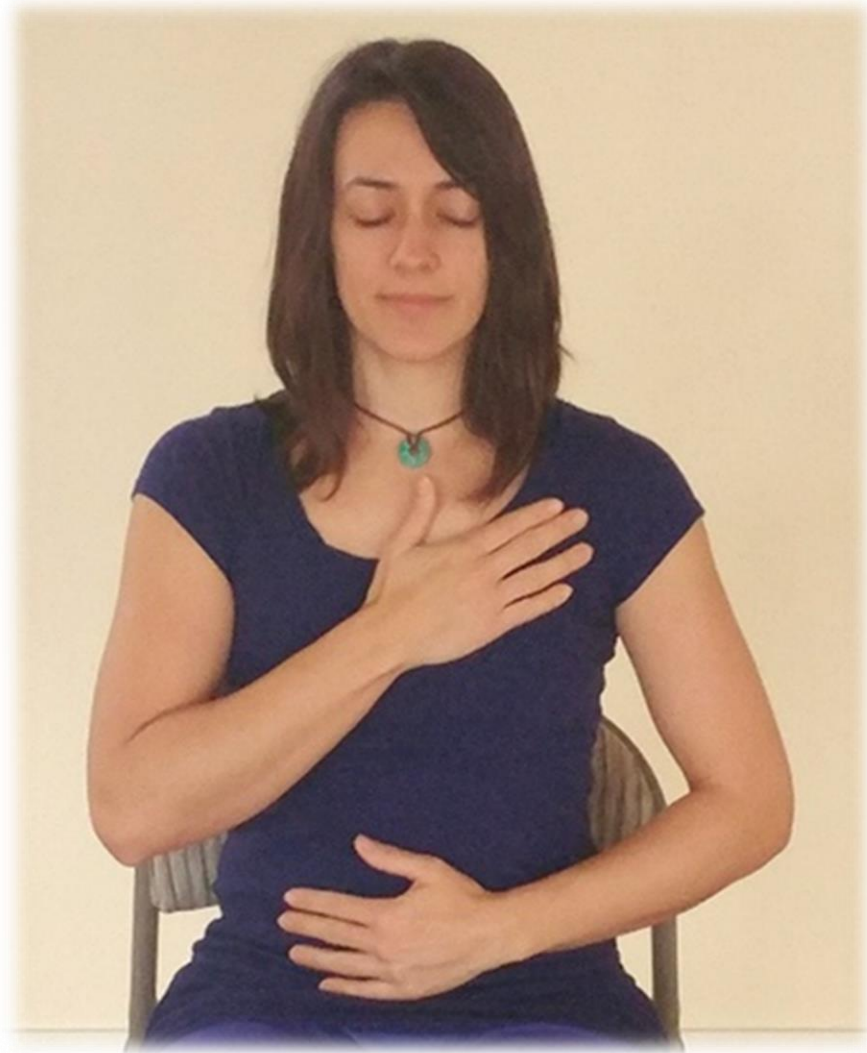
**Always breathe in a comfortable way.**

**When you breathe in, hands apart.  
On a slow breath out, fingertips press.**

**If you like, do this 4 more times.**







# Feel the Breath



**When you are ready, put one or both hands over your heart or your belly.**

**Eyes open or closed, your choice.**



**Feel the breath in.  
Feel the breath out.**

**Take your time with each breath.**

**If you like, do this 4 more times.**



## 7. Energizing: Side Stretch

7A



**As you are ready, stand tall with your hands on your hips.**



**Then, lift one arm in a way that feels comfortable today.**

**Take 2 breaths here.**

**Stand tall again.**



**Repeat on the other side.**



## Shake the Hands



**If you like, gently shake out both hands.**

**Maybe shake them a little harder.**

**Shake in any way that feels good today.**

**Notice how that feels.**

**As you are ready, bring your hands to your sides.**





## Fist Breathing



**When you are ready, sit tall.**

**Gently move one shoulder back.**

**Then, move the other shoulder back.**

**Eyes open or closed, your choice.**



**When you breathe in, make strong fists.**

**On a long breath out, fists release.**

**If you like, do this 4 more times.**



## RESOURCES

This yoga break program is based on ideas discussed in:

***The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and body in the Healing of Trauma***, by Bessel van der Kolk, 2014.

***Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy*** by Pat Ogden, PhD. 2006.

***Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain***, by John Ratey, MD.

***The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*** by Stephen Porges, MD.

***The Brain's Way of Healing: Remarkable Discoveries from the Frontier of Neuroplasticity***, by Norman Doidge, MD. 2016.

***Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body***, by David Emerson with Elizabeth Hopper, 2011.

***Best Management Practices: Yoga with Veterans***. Yoga Service Council, 2016.

***In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness***, by Peter Levine. 2010.

50-minute Bessel van der Kolk interview on Trauma and the Body

<https://onbeing.org/programs/bessel-van-der-kolk-restoring-the-body-yoga-emdr-and-treating-trauma/>

Many articles and peer-reviewed scientific studies available through the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute  
<http://www.traumacenter.org/> (Bessel van der Kolk, MD, Founder and Director)

