

10 Simple Stretching & Mindful Breathing Breaks for Self-care at Work and at Home



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Simple Stretching & Mindful Breathing Breaks for Self-Care at Work or at Home: One Page/One Break

Do one break, but if you have time, do more!

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



- 1. Reduce Tension: Seated Cat/Cow & Feel the Breath (5:18)**
- 2. Reduce Shoulder Stress: Eagle & Sun Breaths (4:04)**
- 3. Grounding: Seated Side Stretch, Twist & Feel the Breath (7:48)**
- 4. Breathe to Calm: “Get Unstuck Breathing” (5:47)**
- 5. Reduce Shoulder Tension: Shoulder Rolls and Goal Post Breathing (5:31)**
- 6. Energizing: Standing Full Body Stretch & Feel the Breath (3:57)**
- 7. Energizing: Standing Side Stretch & Fist Breathing (6:52)**
- 8. Balance and Focus: Tree Pose & Fist Breathing (5:57)**
- 9. Reduce Stress Anywhere: 1-Minute Breathing (1:30)**
- 10. Self-care: 10-min Guided Relaxation (MP3 and MP4 only)**

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TIPS

How is this self-care?

Self-care includes giving yourself time to lower your stress levels using both the body and the breath. You are then more emotionally available for your patients/clients. The more often you give yourself this time, the more natural it feels to have self-care a part of your work day.

What if I only have a minute – literally?

Even a one-minute, five-part breath with long exhalations can lower heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease stress hormone levels, and calm the body.

Which breaks should I do?

Some breaks energize and some calm. Perhaps notice which breaks make you feel better when you need: (1) to reduce stress, or (2) to perk up.

How should I breathe?

Long inhalations are energizing. Long exhalations reduce stress. Always breathe in a comfortable way.



When should I give myself time to do a break?

Some ideas: set a certain time each day (set your phone or note on your calendar), before or after a challenging encounter, when you feel tired, or invite a coworker to join you.

How much do I have to stretch?

Small, slow movements have benefits. The benefits come from finding a comfortable way to move and by noticing your breathing.

Why are there 3 formats of the same 10 breaks?

Choose a format that fits your changing needs for self-care and of your clients/patients. The same format means you quickly can become familiar with the breaks.

1. Self-care Flip Chart (this flip chart)
2. Flip Charts (8.5x11 in) to use with clients and patients (part of the Train the Trainer Kit in 6 languages) and Flip Charts (5x7 in) for client/patient home use
3. Narrated Breaks to share (MP3 and MP4s)

Questions? Yael Calhoun at greentreeyoga@comcast.net or 801-656-7885 (c)

Many thanks to our yoga models: Adriana Chimaras, Rachel Grove, and Supreet Gill.
Please check with your health care provider if you have any questions about your ability to do these simple stretching breaks.

© GTY Self-care Yoga Breaks

How to Create Longer Breaks

To Energize (depression)	To Calm (anxiety)	Calm & then Energize	Energize & then Calm
#5 and #6 (11 minutes)	#2 and #3 (12 minutes)	#3 and #5 (11 minutes)	#6 and #1 (12 minutes)
#7 and #5 (10 minutes)	#5 and #4 (11 minutes)	#5 and #6 (12 minutes)	#5 and #3 (12 minutes)
#7 and #6 (14 minutes)	#1 and #4 (11 minutes)	#7 and #6 (14 minutes)	#6 and #4 (12 minutes)
#5 and #6 (10 minutes)	#1 and #8 (7 minutes)	#2 and #5 (8 minutes)	#5 and #7 (10 minutes)
	#1 and #9 (15 minutes)	#4 and #6 (12 minutes)	#5 and #2 (8 minutes)

Please use any other combinations that meet the needs of your clients/patients.



4. Breathe to Calm: “Get Unstuck”

- (1) Fist Breathing
- (2) Fingertip Breathing
- (3) Feel the Breath



Long exhalations calm.

- Gently move one shoulder back. Then move the other shoulder back.
- Eyes open or closed.
- Breathe in, strong fists.
- Breathe out, fists release.

If you like, take 5 breaths.



2



Always breathe in a comfortable way.

- Breathe in, hands apart.
- Breathe out, fingertips press.

Take your time with 5 breaths.

3



Long inhalations are energizing.

- Eyes open or closed, your choice.
- Feel the breath in.
- Feel the breath out.

Take your time with 5 breaths.

7. Energizing

(1) Side Stretch

(2) Shake the Hands

(3) Fist Breathing



1



Only move in a way that feels like a good stretch today.

- Lift one arm.
- Take 2 breaths and feel the stretch.

Repeat on the other side.

2



As you are ready:

- Gently shake out both hands.
- Shake them a little harder.
- Notice how that feels.

3



Long inhalations energize.

- Gently move one shoulder back. Then move the other shoulder back.
 - Eyes open or closed.
 - Breathe in, strong fists.
 - Breathe out, fists release

If you like, take 5 breaths.

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)

