



# Trauma-sensitive Simple Stretching and Mindful Breathing for Pain Management



by  
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## I. Release Muscle Tension (p.1)

1. Silly “Shake and Stretch”
2. “Hands over Heart” Breath
3. Fist Breathing
4. Neck and Shoulders
5. Neck Massage
6. Shake Hands

## II. Simple Muscle Stretches (p.4)

1. Silly “Shake and Stretch”
2. “Hands over Heart” Breath
3. Side Stretches
4. Back Stretch 1
5. Back Stretch 2
6. “Calm Down” Breath
7. Make a Plan

## III. Finding a Better Way to Move (p.6)

1. Moving Each Shoulder
2. Moving Both Shoulders
3. Hip Stretch 1
4. Hip Stretch 2
5. Fist Breathing

## IV. Strengthening Core Muscles (p.8) and Mindful Breathing

1. Silly “Shake and Stretch”
2. Tree Pose
3. “Hands over Heart” Breath
4. Seated Core
5. “Calm Down” Breath
6. Make a Plan

## V. “Noticing” Breath (p.9)

1. Silly “Shake and Stretch”
2. “Noticing” Breath

## VI. “Tense and Release” Mindful Meditation (p.10)

1. “Tense and Release”
2. Make a Plan





**These breaks are for self-care or to share with coworkers, clients, students, or patients. You can do one or more as meets your changing needs.**

**Please see page 11 for “Ideas to Share”.**

**To make these breaks trauma-sensitive, consider these ideas.**

**1. Be invitational.**

Use such phrases as: “If you like,” and “As you are ready”.

**2. Let people know you are just offering suggestions.**

“You may sit down anytime and still move and breathe with us.”

“Find a better way to move today.”

“Only move (or breathe) in way that is comfortable today.”

“Even small movements have benefits.”

“The only wrong way to do any stretch is if it hurts.”

**3. Participate.**

**Do the breaks together. Most people are visual learners, and seeing you do the break is a part of the learning process and activates mirroring neurons. Your participation also promotes social engagement, a key to self-regulation.**

**Be aware that first being directed and then being watched can cause discomfort and be a stress/ trauma trigger.**

**4. Use the trauma-sensitive phrases in purple text. Being in pain can itself be traumatic, or pain can be caused by some other type of trauma. For example, using the word ‘today’ indicates that each day can be different, and we can notice the changes over time.**

**5. Between stretches, add “Shake the Hands” or “Take a moment and move your arms, your legs, and your hips in any way that feels good today,” to reduce general tension.**

**Note: The six groups of exercises contain some repetition to build confidence as people become familiar with these easy ways to reduce stress and manage pain. These repeats also are proven favorites.**

Please consult your health care provider if you have any questions about your ability to do simple stretching and mindful breathing. The ideas in the program are only suggestions. GreenTREE Yoga has no liability with regard to how these suggestions are used.

## III. Finding a Better Way to Move

### 1. Moving Each Shoulder



When you are ready, slowly move one shoulder forward, and then slowly move that same shoulder back.

Find different ways to move that one shoulder. Move it up, then move it down. **Take your time.**

Only move in a comfortable way.

Now if you like, move that same shoulder in a circle – or in a way that **feels like a good stretch today.**

(Repeat with the other shoulder.)

When you are ready, come back to sitting tall.

### 2. Moving Both Shoulders



Not moving can often increase your pain.

As you are ready, move one shoulder forward as you slowly move the other shoulder back.

Take your time as you find a better way to move.

Make the stretch as gentle or strong as you need **today.**

Different days, different stretches. Notice how you feel.

(Repeat 3 times slowly)



# IV. Strengthening Core Muscles

## & Mindful Breathing

### 1. Silly “Shake and Stretch” (p.1)

### 2. Tree Pose

When you are ready, turn one knee open: toes on the floor or foot pressing against the standing leg.

Balancing with your hand off the chair builds core muscles.

You can put your foot down any time: you are never stuck.

Notice if you are breathing.

Take 2 more slow breaths.

If you like, shake out both hands.

(Repeat standing on the other leg.)



### 3. “Hands Over Heart” Breath (p.1)

### 4. Seated Core

When you are ready, find a comfortable seat.

Taking long breaths out can help reduce pain.

Move one shoulder back, then move the other shoulder back.

Next time YOU breathe out, lean back. It may be just a little, and that is fine.

Keep breathing in a comfortable way.

When you feel muscles in your belly working, take a long, slow breath out. Then come back to sitting tall.

You can make more muscles work by lifting your leg or lifting your arms.

Different days, different stretches.

Keeping your shoulders back will protect your back.



(Do 4 times, any variations.)



Simple Stretching and Mindful Breathing to Manage

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**Note:** These breaks are designed to help you practice ways to change how you manage pain based on the ideas listed below.

**How do I know if this program is right for me?** Be evaluated by your health care provider, who can tell you if it is a good choice.

**How much do I have to do?** Even one minute of mindful breathing or simple stretching can have benefits.

**What will I practice in this class to help me manage my pain?**

❖ **Controlling your breath** to lower heart rate and blood pressure.

Just 5 longer breaths out will stimulate the Vagus Nerve and can lower blood pressure.

❖ **Releasing muscle/emotional tension with simple stretching and strengthening.**

When in pain, we can learn to hold ourselves in ways that then may cause more pain. Simple stretching and then strengthening of muscles can keep your body in better alignment, so there is less pressure on nerves and joints.

❖ **Releasing muscle/emotional tension with ‘tense and release’ exercises.**

The ‘Tense and Release’ exercises allow us to practice how to release tension, which then can decrease pain in the body and in the mind by interrupting the stress cycle in the brain.

❖ **“Finding a better way to move”\***. If moving hurts, try a different way. Not moving often makes pain worse. Tight muscles can press on nerves and unused joints dry out. Even small movements have benefits. \*Moshe Feldenkrais

❖ **Remembering to breathe when feeling pain or tension.**

When we are in pain, we naturally brace for it. We often hold our breath, which then activates the stress cycle and muscles tighten.

❖ **Being ready with your simple plan.** Pick a breathing break (5 breaths) or simple stretch that you like. Next time you start to feel physical or emotional discomfort or pain, say to yourself: “Oh, there is that pain (or uncomfortable thought). I know what to do.” You can be in control of your response to your pain and interrupt your own pain cycle.

Please do not continue a stretch if you experience tingling, burning or numbness.

Free mp3 and mp4s of these breaks available with purchase of this kit.

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