

Relieving-Stress-with-Yoga

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Intro: Relieving Stress with Yoga

Stress is a common part of everyday life. In small amounts stress is perfectly manageable but if left unchecked it can be debilitating. Stress also leads to the production of a hormone called cortisol that, in large quantities, can cause serious health problems. It is because of this that it is important to take steps to relieve stress and decrease cortisol levels in the body.

One of the most effective treatments for these two things is the 11th century yoga practice called Hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is unique from other forms of yoga in that it has a focus on mastering the mind, the body, and the relationship between the two through the practice of positions called asanas. Since its creation people have understood that Hatha yoga has had healing properties but it wasn't until recently that Hatha yoga was scientifically proven to decrease perceived levels of stress and levels of cortisol in the body.

In this Instructable we will be providing a brief set of Hatha yoga asanas specifically designed to maximize stress relief through controlled breathing and stretching. These are beginner level asanas that can be performed by any aspiring yogi. By the end of the guide you should feel relieved of much of the stress you may be experiencing and should feel mentally and physically refreshed.

(Note: a yoga mat or a soft pad is recommended for these asanas)



Step 1: Starting the Routine

Begin the routine by standing upright on your yoga mat with your hands resting flat along your sides and your feet close together. In this position take time to prepare your mind and your body with several deep breaths. These breaths should be slow and your focus should be on the breaths themselves. Once you feel ready move into the first asana.



Step 2: The Half Moon

From the starting position bring your arms up and over your head, touching your palms together. While you raise your arms take a deep breath in so that your lungs are full when you bring your palms together. Breathe out slowly and then hold the position for three seconds.

After the three seconds are over take another deep breath, bending so that your torso and arms are pointing to the right. In doing this keep your legs and feet as stationary as necessary to maintain your balance. Time it so that when you are done breathing in your body is bent between 15 and 20 degrees. Continue breathing deeply as you hold the position for between five and ten seconds.

Once you are done holding the position return to the starting position with your arms relaxed at your sides and repeat the process bending your body to the left side of your body.

Repeat this process three times, returning to the starting position at the conclusion of the third process, and continue on to the next asana.



Step 3: The Tree

From the starting position place your right foot on your inner left thigh near your knee with your arms relaxed at your sides. If your balance is good enough raise your foot onto the top of your left thigh. Ensure that you are balanced and then bring your arms up to your chest, touching your palms together. Hold this position for at least four deep breaths.

If you are having trouble staying balanced it can be helpful to focus on a stationary object near to you such as a rock on the ground or a tile on the floor.

Once you are done with your breaths return to the starting position and repeat the steps with your left foot. Do this asana a total of three times with each foot. After this process is done return to the starting position and move on to the next asana.



Step 4: The Warrior

From the starting position spread your legs so that your body and right foot are pointing to your right. Your left foot should be perpendicular to your right foot. Bend the right leg to form a 90° angle with the ground spreading your legs apart as necessary. Hold this position for one deep breath.

Now, extend your arms so that they are in line with your shoulders. Your shoulders, core, and hips should all be in line with one another but you should continue looking in the direction that your right foot is pointing. Hold this position for four deep breaths, each breath separated by a count of five seconds.

After the breaths are taken return to the starting position and repeat in the opposite direction moving on to the next asana before returning to the starting position. Repeat this process three times.



Step 5: The Triangle

From the previous warrior pose, rotate the core of your body 90° towards the ground as seen above. As you rotate take a deep breath in, breathing out when you are done rotating. Your left arm should be on top of your left leg and your right arm is extended upward towards the ceiling. Take four deep breaths with each breath being separated by a count of five seconds.

Repeat in the opposite direction.

Repeat this asana three times and then return to the starting position for the next asana.



Step 6: The Downward Facing Dog

In this asana you will want to use the yoga mat so that majority of the material is in front of and behind you as opposed to on your sides. Once your yoga mat is oriented in this way start in the starting position. From here bend forward as if you are going to touch your toes. Once in this position take a deep breath.

After your deep breath transition yourself in a position similar to that of a pushup. Once in this position attempt to bring your hands and feet as close together as possible, bringing yourself into an inverted "v" shape. Take three deep breaths with each breath separated by a count of three seconds.

Repeat this asana three times.

Once you are done with your breaths lay yourself flat on the ground for the next asana.



Step 7: The Cat

Drop your knees to the ground as if you are going to crawl, much like a cat walking. Your arms hands should be inline with your legs. Breathe in for four seconds as your curl back upwards towards the ceiling. Keep your shoulders near your ears. Hold that position for three seconds.

Breathe out in three seconds as your push your back down to the original position. Repeat three to four times then transition into the next pose.



Step 8: The Upwards Facing Dog

Place your hands on the mat near your shoulders as if you are about to do a pushup. Push up with your arms keeping your legs on the ground and arching your back. Hold this position for four breaths with each breath separated by a count of three seconds.

On the final breath exhale as you release the asana, returning to a laying position. Repeat this asana three times and then continue to the next asana.



Step 9: Stretching the Core

From your position laying on your stomach flip over so that you are on your back. Bring your arms up and, while keeping your shoulders flat on the ground bring your right leg up and over your left. Hold this position for three breaths and then switch legs, bringing your left leg over your right.

After holding this for three breaths return to the laying position with your arms relaxing at your sides. Repeat this asana three times and then continue to the next asana.



Step 10: The Full Body Stretch

Place your arms over your head. Imagine someone is holding you from both ends and pulling you gently in either direction, stretching your arms and legs as far as they can go. Try to keep your spine straight and on the mat.

From this position transition into the final asana.



Step 11: Full Body Relaxation

Face your body so your stomach is facing the ground. Keep your arms flat against your sides. Keep normal breathing patterns. This is to finish calming you down from your busy day by giving you a chance to let go of your worries and to simply nap. If at this point you are having issues relaxing shift your focus on your breathing making each breath slow and deliberate.



Step 12: Check FREE Video Presentation

