

Relaxation and Desk Yoga



REJUVENATE

TYPES OF RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

AUTOGENIC TRAINING

This technique uses both visual imagery and body awareness to move a person into a deep state of relaxation. The person imagines a peaceful place and then focuses on different physical sensations, moving from the feet to the head. For example, one might focus on warmth and heaviness in the limbs, easy, natural breathing, or a calm heartbeat.

BREATHING

You place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Take a slow, deep breath, sucking in as much air as you can. As you are doing this, your belly should push against your hand. Hold your breath and then slowly exhale. Complete this for as long as required to relax.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

This involves slowly tensing and then releasing each muscle group individually, starting with the muscles in the toes and finishing with those in the head.

GUIDED IMAGERY

Guided imagery involves listening to a trained therapist or a guided imagery CD to move into a state of deep relaxation. Once in a relaxed state, the images that come up in your mind can help you uncover important realizations about your emotional, spiritual, and physical health.

MEDITATION

Meditation is an approach to training the mind, like the way that fitness is an approach to training the body. But many meditation techniques exist — so how do you learn how to meditate?

It's extremely difficult for a beginner to sit for hours and think of nothing or have an "empty mind." In general, the easiest way to begin meditating is by focusing on the breath — an example of the two of the most common approaches to meditation: concentration and mindfulness.

CONCENTRATION MEDITATION:

Concentration meditation involves focusing on a single point. This could be repeating a single word or mantra, staring at a candle flame, listening to a repetitive gong, or counting beads on a mala. Since focusing the mind is challenging, a beginner might meditate for only a few minutes and then work up to longer durations.

In this form of meditation, you simply refocus your awareness on the chosen object of attention each time you notice your mind wandering. Rather than pursuing random thoughts, you simply let them go. Through this process, your ability to concentrate improves.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Mindfulness meditation encourages the practitioner to observe wandering thoughts as they drift through the mind. The intention is not to get involved with the thoughts or to judge them, but simply to be aware of each mental note as it arises.

Through mindfulness meditation, you can see how your thoughts and feelings tend to move patterns. Over time, you can become more aware of the human tendency to quickly judge an experience as good or bad, pleasant, or unpleasant. With practice, an inner balance develops.

In some schools of meditation, students practice a combination of concentration and mindfulness. Many disciplines call for stillness — to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the teacher.

HOW TO MEDITATE: SIMPLE MEDITATION

This meditation exercise is an excellent introduction to meditation techniques:

- Sit or lie comfortably. You may even want to invest in a meditation chair or cushion
- Close your eyes
- Make no effort to control the breath; simply breathe naturally
- Focus your attention on the breath and on how the body moves with each inhalation and exhalation. Notice the movement of your body as you breathe. Observe your chest, shoulders, rib cage, and belly. Simply focus your attention on your breath without controlling its pace or intensity. If your mind wanders, return your focus back to your breath.
- Maintain this meditation practice for two to three minutes to start, and then try it for longer periods

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

- Lower blood pressure
- Improved blood circulation
- Lower heart rate
- Less perspiration
- Slower respiratory rate
- Less anxiety
- Lower blood cortisol levels
- More feelings of well-being



1. CHAIR CAT-COW STRETCH

- Sit on a chair with the spine long and both feet on the floor. Place your hands on your knees or the tops of your thighs.
- On an inhale, arch your spine and roll your shoulders down and back, bringing your shoulder blades onto your back. This is cow position.
- On an exhale, round your spine and drop your chin to your chest, letting the shoulder and head come forward. This is cat position.
- Continue moving between cow on the inhalations and cat on the exhalations for five breaths.



2. CHAIR RAISED HANDS POSE - URDHVA HASTASANA

- On an inhalation, raise your arms toward the ceiling.
- Maintain good upper body posture with the shoulders relaxed and rib cage sitting naturally over the hips. Anchor your sit bones in your chair seat and reach up from there.



3. CHAIR FORWARD BEND - UTTANASANA

- On an exhalation, come into a forward bend over the legs.
- Let the hands rest on the floor if they reach it. Let the head hang heavy.
- On an inhalation, raise the arms back up over the head.
- Repeat this movement between a raised arms position and a forward fold several times, moving with the breath.



4. CHAIR EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE - UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

- After your final forward bend, stay folded.
- Bring your left fingertips to the floor on the outside of your left foot.
- Open your chest as you twist to the right on an inhale, bringing your right arm and gaze up at the ceiling. This is your chair version of extended side angle pose. Hold here for several breaths. Bring the right arm down on an exhale.
- If your left hand doesn't come easily to the floor, place a block under it or bring it to your left knee instead and twist from there.



5. CHAIR PIGEON - EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA

- Come back up to sit.
- Bring your right ankle to rest on your left thigh, keeping the knee in line with your ankle as much as possible. Hold this chair pigeon for three to five breaths.



6. CHAIR EAGLE - GARUDASANA

- Cross your right thigh over your left thigh for eagle pose. If you can, wrap the right foot all the way around the left calf.
- Cross your left arm over the right one at the elbow. Bend the elbows and bring your palms to touch.
- Lift the elbows while dropping the shoulders away from the ears. Hold three to five breaths.
- Repeat on the other side.



7. CHAIR SPINAL TWIST - ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

- Come to sit sideways on the chair, facing to the left.
- Twist your torso toward the left, holding onto the back of the chair, for a spinal twist.
- Lengthen your spine on each inhale and twist on each exhale for five breaths.
- Move your legs around to the right side of the chair and repeat the twist to the right side.



8. CHAIR WARRIOR I - VIRABHADRASANA I

- Now keep the right leg in position over the side of the chair while you swing the left leg behind you.
- Plant the sole of the left foot on the floor roughly parallel to the seat of the chair and straighten the left leg.
- Keep your torso facing over the right leg as you raise your arms up to the ceiling on an inhale coming to warrior I. Hold for three breaths.
- Ensure your hips are facing forwards throughout.



9. CHAIR WARRIOR II - VIRABHADRASANA II

- On an exhale, open up the arms with the right arm coming forward and the left arm going back.
- Draw the left hip back and turn the torso to the left, so that it is aligned with the front of the chair.
- Gaze out over the right fingertips and hold warrior II for three breaths.



10. REVERSE WARRIOR

- Let the left arm come down the left leg and lift the right arm up to the ceiling on an inhale for reverse warrior. Hold for three breaths.
- Bring both legs to the front of the chair before coming to sit sideways on the chair facing left and going through the series of three warrior poses on the left side.



11. CHAIR SAVASANA

- Sit up tall and let your shoulders fall down and away from your ears.
- Take a few minutes to sit with your eyes closed and hands in your lap at the end of your practice. This seated Savasana will help your body absorb all the good effects of the poses you have done and transition you into the rest of your day.