

Gentle Yoga

A sweet and simple class designed for the absolute beginner, with more challenging options for those who want to take it to the next level.

1. Belly Breathing

Lie on the back with a bean bag placed on the belly. The feet roll out to the sides and the palms turn up to face the ceiling. Take a deep breath and feel the bean bag lift toward the ceiling, on the exhale feel the bean bag lower toward the spine. Repeat 5 times.



2. Ankle Rotations

Point and flex the toes 5 times. Turn the feet clockwise for 5 rotations. Turn counter-clockwise for 5 rotations.



3. Knee Rotations

Holding on to the knees, circle the knees outward for 5 rotations. Circle inward for 5 rotations.



5. Hip Rotations

Lift the right leg and point the toes toward the ceiling. Rotate the entire leg clockwise like tracing a golf ball with the big toe. After a few rotations, increase the size to a softball. Then a basketball. Then a beach ball. Then a hula hoop. Repeat rotations in same increments going counterclockwise. Lower the right leg and take a break. Then repeat entire sequence with the left leg.



6. Figure 4

(a) Place the feet flat on the floor with the knees pointing toward the ceiling. Cross the right ankle over the left knee and use the right hand to push gently on the right knee. Point the right toes toward the ceiling. (b) Reach the right hand between the thighs and grasp either behind the left knee or on top of the left knee with both hands. Lower both knees toward the chest and take 5 breaths. Repeat entire sequence on the left side.



7. Piriformis Stretch

(a) Place feet flat on the floor and cross the right knee over the left. Lower both knees toward the chest and hold the knees with both hands. Hold for 5 breaths. (b) For a deeper stretch: reach up, hold the feet, and gently pull them toward the floor.



4. Shoulder Stretch

From lying on the back with legs out long, reach arms toward the ceiling and grasp opposite elbows. Gently rock arms to the left, moving across the chest. Gently rock arms to the right. Continue rocking back and forth across the body. Add head movement, following arms, if that feels good for the neck. Repeat 20 times.



8. Cat/Cow Pose

(a) From a kneeling position, place both hands on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Press through the palms. Inhale and look toward the ceiling. (b) Exhale and arch the back upward, tucking the chin. Repeat both poses 9 more times.

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9. Kneeling Balance

(a) From a kneeling position lift the right hand and reach forward while lifting the left leg and reaching backward, like being pulled in two directions. (b) Reach back and gently grasp the left foot with the right hand. Take 5 breaths. If this is too difficult, repeat (a). (c) Bend the right arm to a 90° angle and lift beside the body. Bend the left leg the same way and lift, like peeing on a fire hydrant! (d) Straighten the right arm and straighten the left leg. Hold 5 breaths. Repeat the entire sequence, switching sides.



10. Kneeling Shoulder Stretches

(a) From a kneeling position, reach the left arm under the body, coming down onto the left shoulder. The left ear should be on the ground (or close). Keep the right hand planted on the floor. Take 5 breaths. (b) For a more advanced version, lift the right arm in the air. Repeat entire sequence on the right shoulder.

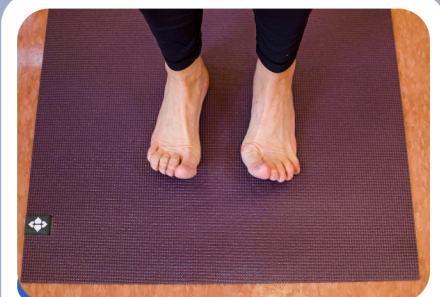
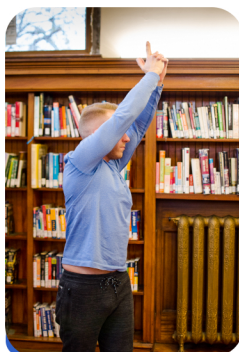
11. Down Dog

From a kneeling position, curl the toes under and place the hands shoulder-width apart. Push into palms and lift the hips in the air, lowering heels toward the floor, creating an inverted V shape. Line the ears up with the elbows. Lift the pinkie toes to externally rotate the thighs. Take 5 deep breaths. Step feet between the hands and come into standing.



12. Six Essential Movements of the Spine

(a) From a standing position, reach arms overhead and clasp hands, releasing index fingers towards the ceiling. Inhale. Exhale and lean to the right. Inhale and come back up. Exhale and lean to the left. (b) Inhale back up. Exhale and twist to the right. Inhale back to center. Exhale and twist to the left. (c) Inhale and come back to center. Exhale and look up to the ceiling. Inhale back to center. (d) Exhale and lower the arms to the floor. Slowly, moving one vertebrae at a time, roll the spine back to a standing position.



13. Mountain Pose

(a) From standing lift the toes and lower them slowly, feeling the floor solid underfoot. (b) Lift heart toward the ceiling. Relax the shoulders. Relax the jaw. Keep the pelvis neutral. Take 5 breaths.



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14. Shoulder Rotations

(a) From a standing position, raise the arms out to the sides, at shoulder height, fingertips pointing to the ceiling. Rotate the arms in small circles going clockwise (backward). Gradually make the circles larger and larger. Repeat until the arms fatigue. Rest. (b) Repeat, this time with fingertips pointing to the floor and the arms rotating in small circles going counterclockwise (forward).



15. Tree Pose

Turn the right foot to a 90° angle. Lift the right foot to the left ankle. Option to lift to the calf or thigh instead (as shown). Bring the hands in prayer pose to the center of chest or raise arms overhead. Take 5 breaths. Lower the foot and repeat on the left side.



16. Chair Pose

From a standing position with feet hip-width apart, bend the knees and drop the hips toward the ankles. Reach the arms forward, palms facing in. For more of a challenge, reach the arms overhead and sit lower, pressing through the heels.

17. Moving Bridge Pose

(a) Lie on the back with the feet planted on the floor and the knees pointing toward the ceiling. (b) Inhale and lift the hips upward and raise the arms overhead. Exhale and lower the hips and arms. Repeat 4 more times.



18. Modified Fish Pose

Lie on the mat and bring the soles of the feet together, the knees draping open to the sides. For added support place blocks under the knees. Reach the arms overhead, creating a halo shape. If this is painful for the shoulders, leave the hands at the sides. Hold for 5 breaths.



19. Bound Forward Bend

(a) From an easy sitting position (or Lotus or Half-Lotus) reach behind the back and hold the opposite elbows or wrists. Inhale and look toward the ceiling. Exhale and fold torso over the knees. (b) For more of a challenge, lower the head to the mat or a block. Hold for 5 breaths.



20. Meditation Pose

Sitting in an easy crossed-leg position (or Lotus or Half-Lotus) place the back of wrists on the fronts of knees. Tuck the index finger under thumb. Straighten the other three fingers toward the floor. Tuck the chin and close the eyes, or gaze softly ahead. Hold for 10 breaths.



21. Uplifting Pose

Cross the ankles. (a) Place the hands on blocks or on the mat next to hips. Lift the knees and lift the bottom off the mat. (b) Option to lift hands and hover. Hold for 5 breaths. Lower to the ground.



22. Savasana

Lie on the mat with a bean bag on the belly. Roll the feet to the sides and the palms toward the ceiling. Close the eyes and continue with Belly Breathing for at least 5 minutes.

