

YOGA

“Mindful Breathing and Movement”

Science has shown that yoga can change parts of our brain and body for the better, especially over time. People who practice yoga on a regular basis tend to have better overall health and increased wellbeing. It may even help to relieve some pain or illness in your body. It may also support clearer thinking and a better ability to handle difficult emotions.

The word ‘Yoga’ means “ to yolk”, or, in other words “to unite”. We don’t have to practice super fancy forms, like the ones on yoga magazines or in the movies. Any person, regardless of shape, size, gender, or ethnicity/race can practice yoga! If we think about yoga, and what it means to “unite”, there are many examples:

- Uniting your breath and body by breathing in sync with your body movements.
- Uniting your thoughts, beliefs, words, and actions.
- Uniting in your community.

What else might yoga, or, “to unite”, mean to you?

If you find it useful, try to use Breath Regulation practice during yoga as well. The more we breathe deeply while we practice yoga forms, the more beneficial it may be. Below is a series of forms. You don’t have to do them in any certain order, and you don’t have to do all of them. Pick the ones that you are curious about or that feel useful for you!

YOGA FORMS



Mountain Form

1. Stand tall with feet together.
2. Gently bring the shoulders down and back.
3. Try to make your weight evenly distributed through your feet soles. Arms at your sides.
4. Take a deep breath and raise your hands overhead. Have your palms face each other, and keep your arms straight (gently).
5. Reach up toward the sky with your fingertips.
6. Take a few deep breaths. Stop when you find it useful to stop. Stay as long as you like!



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Photo credit Tara Marchiori, Chasing Light Studio



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Downward Dog Form

1. Start with hands and knees on mat. To protect your body, try to make sure your hands are directly under your shoulders. Also make sure your knees are under your hips.
2. Walk hands a few inches forward and spread fingers wide, pressing palms into mat.
3. Curl toes under and slowly press hips toward ceiling, bringing your body into an upside-down V, pressing shoulders away from ears. Feet should be hip-width apart, knees slightly bent.
4. Hold for 3 full breaths. Or, for however long feels useful for you.

Another way to practice this form is to use a chair or other stable surface for your hands. This version of the form can take pressure off of the wrists, shoulders, and back. Still follow directions above.

Both forms are equally beneficial!

Warrior Form

1. Stand with legs 3 to 4 feet apart, turning right foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly.
2. Bring your hands to your hips and release your shoulders (gently make space between your shoulders and ears).
3. Extend arms out to the side with palms (hands) down.
4. Bend right knee 90 degrees, keeping knee over ankle.
5. Gaze out over right hand.
Stay for 1 minute, or however long feels useful for you.
6. Switch sides and repeat.

Inner thigh



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Tree Form

1. From standing, bring weight into your right foot.
2. Pick up your left foot and take the sole of your foot to the inner calf (or ankle or thigh) and your knee out to the side (see labeled pictures).
3. Reach arms overhead.
4. Hug to the midline of your body by pressing your foot into your leg and your leg into your foot.
5. Pick one spot to look at to help you maintain your balance.
6. Hold for two breaths or as long as you like!
7. Repeat on the other side.

Inner calf



Inner ankle



Photo credit: Tara Marchiori,
Chasing Light Studio

Inner thigh
(2nd example)



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Seated Twist Form

1. Sit on the floor with your legs extended.
2. Cross right foot over outside of left thigh; bend left knee. Keep right knee pointed toward ceiling.
3. Place left elbow to the outside of right knee and right hand on the floor behind you.
4. Twist right, moving from your abdomen; keep both sides of your bottom on the floor. Only twist as far as feels safe to you!
5. Make space between your ears and shoulders, by gently bringing your shoulders down and back.
6. Take a few deep breaths and stay for as long as you like!
7. Switch sides and repeat.

*A different way to practice the form: Keep bottom leg straight and place both hands on raised knee. If your lower back rounds forward, sit on a folded blanket.



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Child's Form

1. Sit up comfortably on your heels.
2. Roll your torso forward, bringing your forehead to rest on the floor (or bed) in front of you.
3. Lower your upper front body as close to your knees as you comfortably can.
4. Extend your arms in front of you, or, place them gently by your sides.
4. Hold the form and breathe for as long as you like!



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NOTE: You do *not* need a yoga mat to practice yoga. You just need enough space so you can move your body freely without accidentally moving into something around you. You *don't* need yoga pants or “yoga clothes”. Just wear whatever feels comfortable to you! For example, sweatpants and a t-shirt is a comfortable option, but you may choose to wear whatever you want! If you feel pain at any point, please stop.

Always consult your physician before trying or incorporating any new exercise(s) into your life.