

## Yoga at Your Desk

It's important to move throughout the day. Stand up every 30 minutes or so; take your eyes off of the computer and focus far out into the distance; walk around, get a drink of water; stretch, and breathe. When you need something more, select any of the following moves that appeal to you. There's no "right" order, no optimum number; just listen to your body – it knows how it wants to move to release tension. Breath is the quickest, most effective stress reducer. Even if you just have a few moments, connecting with your breath can make a big difference in the way you feel.

### Breath

Take a few moments to sit quietly, bringing awareness to your breath. Align hips, shoulders, and head, keeping upper body straight, but not rigid. Breathe deeply, allowing the breath to come into your lower abdomen, then your middle and upper abdomen, then your chest; let the breath fill your torso like a balloon is expanding with each inhale, then emptying with the exhale. Throughout the following movements, try to stay focused and breathe fully and deeply.

### Head and Neck

Sitting comfortably, take a deep inhale. On the exhale, turn your head to look over your right shoulder. Inhale to come back to center, exhale and look over the left shoulder. Shoulders and hips stay facing forward – only the head moves. Repeat 3 times to each side, trying to look a little further over the shoulder with each breath.

Return to center. On the inhale, lengthen through the top of the head; on the exhale, tilt your right ear to your right shoulder, stretching through the left side of your neck. Keep head in line with shoulders, not dropped to the front or the back. If you'd like more resistance, rest your right hand on your head and extend your left arm to the side or under your chair. Hold for 3 breaths. Repeat on the other side, then return to center.

From center, inhale to lengthen, then exhale and drop chin toward chest, resting hands on the back of your head, lengthening through the back of your neck for 3 breaths. Release the left hand down, and gently take the head down and to the right, right hand on your head for resistance, lengthening through the back left quadrant of your neck. Experiment with the angle of your head to find what feels the best on your neck. Hold for 3 breaths, then gently release to center, replace the right hand with the left, and repeat by dropping the head gently to the left for 3 breaths, breathing into the back right side of the neck. Return to center.

Place hands on either side of your neck. Inhale and lengthen the top of the head upward; with the exhale, look behind you on the ceiling, keeping the neck elongated, rather than letting it collapse onto the upper back. Take 3 breaths, then inhale to return to neutral.

### Eyes

Relax the muscles of your face and soften your jaw. Without moving the head, move the eyes in a large clockwise circle 4 times, then in 4 counter-clockwise circles. Keeping the head still, look up to the ceiling then down at the floor 4 times.

### Shoulders

Circle shoulders to the back 3 times, then the front three times, letting the arms be free and easy.

On an inhale, draw the shoulders up by the ears. With the exhale, drop shoulders down and back, squeezing the shoulder blades together. Repeat 3 times.

### Wrists

Extend the right arm out in front of you, palm forward, fingers up. Pull back gently on the fingers of the right hand with the left, lengthening through the underside of the right wrist. 3 breaths, then switch, pulling back on the fingers of the left hand with the right.

Bring the backs of the hands together, forearms parallel to the floor; press equally through the back of each hand. Gradually let the elbows sink downward, stretching through the opposite side of the wrist. Depending on the flexibility of your wrists, forearms may stay pretty close to parallel with the floor, or they may sink down considerably. Hold for 3 breaths, letting the elbows sink deeper with each breath.

Draw elbows in near your waist, making a tight fist with each hand. Hold tightly for several seconds, then open your hand wide, lengthening and opening the fingers. Repeat 3 times.

### Torso, Arms and Sides

Bring your arms out to the side at shoulder level, palms facing down. Reach through the fingertips, allowing the arms to lengthen, the elbows to open. Take 2-3 breaths here.



Rotate the palms to face up, rolling the shoulders down and back. 2-3 breaths, reaching out through the fingers, squeezing the shoulder blades together.

Inhale the arms overhead, palms facing in, arms shoulder-width. Reach through the tips of the fingers, lengthening down the sides. Reach upward with one hand and then the other.

Interlace the fingers, palms facing up. Stretch the fingers and palms. Take a couple of breaths here, then exhale and take the body into a c-curve to the side. After a couple of breaths, inhale back up to center, then exhale to the other side for a couple of breaths.

### **Chest**

Interlock your fingers behind your back (if there's a back on your chair, reach for the outside edges of that instead). Stretch the shoulders, arch the upper back, and open the chest. Squeeze the shoulder blades toward each other, rotating shoulders down and back. Breathe. Keep the neck extended, rather than allowing it to collapse onto the upper back.

After a few breaths there, bend your elbows and bring your hands to the right side of your waist. Take an inhale. On the exhale, gently squeeze the right elbow to the left. Inhale to lengthen through the top of the head; on the exhale, take the elbow a little farther to the left. Release, then repeat on the other side, changing the interlocking of the fingers so the opposite thumb is on top (release hands, shift top index finger under the second index finger).

### **Upper Back**

Take your right hand to the left shoulder; take the elbow to chest level. Place the left hand on the right elbow. Inhale; with the exhale, press the elbow back toward the shoulder, letting the right hand dangle. With each inhale, lengthen through the top of your head; with the exhale, press the elbow a little farther back. 3 breaths, then switch sides.

Extend the arms, palms up. Cross the right arm under the left and bend at the elbows, bringing the backs of the hands toward each other. If possible, bring the palms together. Keeping the shoulders rolled down and back, draw the elbows up toward shoulder height. You can stay upright, or allow the back to curve, breathing into the space between the shoulder blades. 3 breaths here, then release and reverse, crossing left arm under right.

### **Middle and Lower Back**

Place your hands palms down on your desk and pull your chair back a few feet, until your back is flat with arms extended. Head faces the floor, in line with the spine. Tailbone draws back, away from the desk, arms and sides lengthen, shoulders roll down the back. Take 3 breaths, then return to upright.

### **Forward Bend**

Sitting at the edge of your chair, open the legs a little wider than hip distance. Inhale and lengthen upward; on the exhale, hinge from the hips and fold forward, letting your torso, arms and head hang down toward the floor. Rest hands on the floor, ankles, or shins. Take 3 deep breaths, letting your lower back expand. Inhale and slowly round up to seated.

### **Twist**

With feet firmly pressing into the ground, sit upright, pressing the sit bones down into the chair. Inhale and lengthen upward, then exhale and twist right, placing the right hand on the back of the chair, the left hand on the side. With each inhale, lengthen upward; with each exhale, twist a little farther, looking over the right shoulder. Take 3 breaths, then exhale to unwind. Repeat to the left.

