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## YOGA FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY

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### INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a **feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness**. It might cause sweat, feel restless and tense, and have a rapid heartbeat. It can be a normal reaction to stress. one might feel anxious when faced with a difficult problem at work, before taking a test, or before making an important decision. When anxiety takes hold it can be difficult to find a way to refocus our mind. Yoga has been shown to do amazing things for people living with anxiety, as well as depression. There are a number of particular poses that can be good for anxious feelings, some best yoga poses for anxiety:

### VIRASANA: THE HERO'S POSE

This seated posture can help you find your center. Focusing on your breath may help you find ease in the stillness of this pose.

#### Muscles worked:

- erector spinae, quadriceps, knee muscles and ankle muscles

#### Procedure:

1. Get into a kneeling position. Your knees should be together, and your feet should be slightly wider than your hips.
2. Keep the tops of your feet flat on the floor.
3. Sit back so that your bottom reaches the floor in between your feet. If your bottom does not reach the floor, use a block or a book.
4. Place your hands on your thighs.
5. Sit up straight to open your chest and lengthen your spine.
6. Hold this pose for up to 5 minutes.

### TREE POSE - VRIKSHASANA

This classic standing pose may help you focus inward, quieting racing thoughts.

#### Muscles worked:

- abdominals , psoas, quadriceps and tibialis anterior

**Procedure:**

1. From standing, bear your weight with your right foot and slowly lift your left foot off of the ground.
2. Slowly turn the sole of your left foot toward the inside of your left leg.
3. Place it on the outside of your left ankle, calf, or thigh.
4. Avoid pressing your foot into your knee.
5. Bring your hands into any comfortable position. This could be in prayer position in front of your heart or hanging alongside your sides.
6. Hold this pose for up to 2 minutes.
7. Repeat on the opposite side.

**TRIANGLE POSE (UTTHITA TRIKONASANA)**

This energizing pose can help ease tension in your neck and back.

**Muscles worked:**

- latissimus dorsi, internal oblique, gluteus maximus and medius, hamstrings and quadriceps

**Procedure:**

1. Come into a standing position with your feet wider than your hips.
2. Face your left toes forward and your right toes in at a slight angle.
3. Lift your arms to extend out from your shoulders. Your palms should face down.
4. Extend your torso forward as you reach forward with your left hand.
5. Hinge at your hip joint to bring your right hip back. Take your left hand to your leg, the floor, or a block.
6. Extend your right arm up toward the ceiling.
7. Gaze in any comfortable direction.
8. Hold this pose for up to 1 minute.
9. Then do the opposite side.

**Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)**

*ut = intense*

*tan = to stretch or extend*

*asana = pose*

**Benefit:** A calming posture that lengthens the hamstrings and activates the inner legs

**Instruction**

1. Stand with your feet together. Bend your knees slightly and fold your torso over your legs, moving from the hips, not the lower back.
2. Place your hands next to your feet or on the ground in front of you.
3. Inhale and extend your chest to lengthen your spine. Keep your gaze directed forward.
4. Exhale and gently press both legs toward straight. Lift the kneecaps and gently spiral your upper, inner thighs back. Keep your legs straight without hyper extending.
5. On an exhalation, extend your torso down without rounding your back. Stay long throughout your neck, extending the crown of your head toward the ground. Draw your shoulders down your back.

**DONT'S**

Don't round your upper back and roll your shoulders forward

Don't lock your knees and round your lower back

## MATSYASANA

This backbend can help relieve tightness in your chest and back.

### Muscles worked:

- intercostals, hip flexors, trapezius and abdominals

### Procedure

1. Sit with your legs stretched out in front of you.
2. Place your hands underneath your buttocks with your palms facing down.
3. Squeeze your elbows together and expand your chest.
4. Then lean back onto your forearms and elbows, pressing into your arms to stay lifted in your chest.
5. If it's comfortable, you may let your head hang back toward the floor or rest it on a block or cushion.
6. Hold this pose for up to one minute.

### Contraindications and Cautions

- High or low blood pressure, Migraine, Insomnia and Serious lower-back or neck injury

### Therapeutic Applications

- Constipation, Respiratory ailments, Mild backache, Fatigue, **Anxiety and Menstrual pain**

## UTTANA SHISHOSANA (EXTENDED PUPPY POSE)

This heart-opening pose stretches and lengthens the spine to relieve tension.

### Muscles worked:

- deltoids, trapezius, erector spinae and triceps

### Procedure:

1. Come into a tabletop position.
2. Extend your hands forward a few inches and sink your buttocks down toward your heels.
3. Press into your hands and engage your arms muscles, keeping your elbows lifted.
4. Gently rest your forehead on the floor.
5. Allow your chest to open and soften during this pose.
6. Hold this pose for up to two minutes.

## BALASANACHILD'S POSE

This relaxing pose may help ease stress and fatigue.

### Muscles worked:

- gluteus maximus, rotator muscles, hamstrings and spinal extensors.

### Procedure:

1. From a kneeling position, sink back onto your heels.
2. Fold forward, walking your hands out in front of you.
3. Allow your torso to fall heavy into your thighs, and rest your forehead on the floor.
4. Keep your arms extended forward or rest them alongside your body.
5. Hold this pose for up to 5 minutes.

## HEAD TO KNEE POSE (JANU SIRSASANA)

This pose may help soothe your nervous system.

### Muscles worked:

- groin, hamstrings, spinal extensors and gastrocnemius

**Procedure:**

1. Sit on the edge of a cushion or folded blanket with your left leg extended.
2. Press the sole of your right foot into your left thigh.
3. You can place a cushion or block under either knee for support.
4. Inhale as you extend your arms overhead.
5. Exhale as you hinge at the hips, lengthening your spine to fold forward.
6. Rest your hands anywhere on your body or on the floor.
7. Hold this pose for up to 5 minutes.
8. Then repeat on the opposite side.

**SEATED FORWARD BEND**

This pose is thought to calm the mind while relieving anxiety. If you feel that your thoughts have been scattered throughout your practice, take this time to turn inward and come back to your intention.

**Muscles worked:**

- pelvic muscles, erector spinae, gluteus maximus and gastrocnemius

**Procedure:**

1. Sit on the edge of a folded blanket or cushion with your legs straight out in front of you.
2. You may keep a slight bend in your knees.
3. Inhale to lift up your arms.
4. Slowly hinge at your hips to extend forward, resting your hands anywhere on your body or the floor.
5. Remain in this pose for up to 5 minutes.

**LEGS-UP-THE-WALL POSE**

This restorative pose allows for complete relaxation of your mind and body.

**Muscles worked:**

- hamstrings, pelvic muscles, lower back, front torso and back of the neck

**Procedure:**

1. Sit with your right side against a wall.
2. Then lie back as you swing your legs up along the wall.
3. Your buttocks should be as close to the wall as is comfortable for you. This could be right up against the wall or a few inches away.
4. Relax and soften in your back, chest, and neck. Allow your body to melt into the floor.
5. Hold this pose for up to 10 minutes.

**RECLINING BOUND ANGLE POSE**

This relaxing pose can help you let go of anxiety while promoting a sense of calmness. You can make it more of a heart opener by placing a block or cushion under your back.

**Muscles worked:**

- adductors, groin muscles, pelvic muscles and psoas

**Procedure:**

1. Lie on your back and bring the soles of your feet together.
2. Place cushions under your knees or hips for support.
3. Place one hand on your stomach area and one hand on your heart, focusing on your breath.
4. Stay in this pose for up to 10 minutes.

**Conclusion and summary**

When researchers compared the results, they found that yoga significantly reduced feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. Some studies reveal even a single session of hatha yoga was effective in reducing stress from an acute psychological stressor. A psychological stressor is a task or event that prompts an immediate response, like a fight-or-flight reaction. While this research is promising, larger, more in-depth studies are needed to expand upon these findings.

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