

YOGA FOR CALM



What is yoga?

Yoga is an integrated system which uses the body, breath and mind to encourage a sense of wellbeing. It originated in India and has been practised for 2000 years. Mindful Yoga is holistic in that it incorporates ethics, movement, breathing and meditation.

How does yoga help create calm?

When we experience stress and anxiety, we experience an increased arousal of the sympathetic nervous system – fight or flight response. We can assist the nervous system to return to homeostasis by activating the parasympathetic nervous system. This can be done from the top down – use the prefrontal cortex to help regulate the system, and also from the bottom up using the primitive brain and the body to help regulate the system. Yoga when practised slowly and mindfully uses both the top down and the bottom up approaches. Studies have found yoga can increase vagal tone (i.e. increase parasympathetic nervous system activity), reduce cortisol (a stress hormone) and lower inflammation.

<https://theconversation.com/how-yoga-makes-us-happy-according-to-science-77840>

Tips for using yoga to create calm

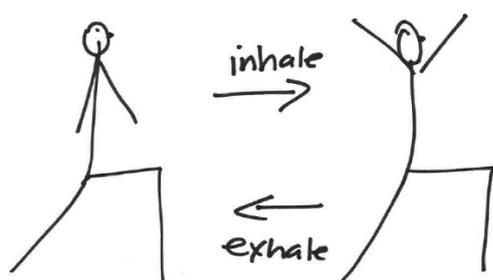
- Start standing. Then go to hands and knees, backbends, lying poses and then breathing practises.
- Meet yourself where you are at, compassionately and kindly. Include pauses between poses.
- The mind responds to both repetition and novelty. Consider doing the same sequence every day, but maybe vary where you put your arms.
- Do what you enjoy.

Yoga for Calm – Sample Practice Sequence



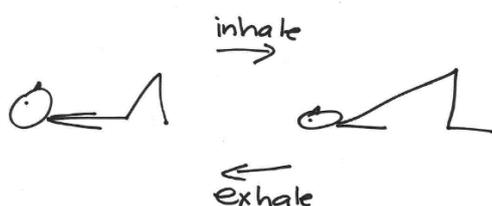
1. Standing Mountain Pose – Tadasana:

Take a moment or two to connect your feet into the ground and allow your spine to straighten up.



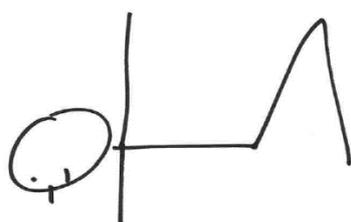
2. Warrior One:

Place one leg forward and find your balance as you bend the front knee. As you inhale raise your arms over your head, and as you exhale, lower your arms. Repeat. You can hold the pose for a few breaths if that feels good, but remember to breathe while you are holding the posture.



3. Bridge Pose:

Come to the floor. Place your feet close to your buttocks and your arms alongside the body. As you inhale, raise the buttocks. As you exhale, lower the buttocks. Repeat. Hold if comfortable, remembering to breathe freely.



4. Supine Twist:

From a lying position with your feet on the floor, find the breath. Allow the exhale breath to move your knees towards one side and your head in the other direction. Inhale to centre, repeat to the other side. Repeat and then hold.



5. Constructive Rest Position – Belly Breathing:

Come to stillness on your back with you knees bent. Find a spot where the feet are not too close, a bit further away than your bridge pose. Allow the lower back to release and activate 'belly breathing'. Place your hands on your abdomen and notice how your hands move as you breathe. Let your belly stay soft and notice as it naturally expands with your inhale, and gently releases as you exhale. Stay for as long as you want.

Note: Counsellor Maureen runs a Mindful Yoga Class at OASIS, during term time, from 12.00pm to 1.00pm