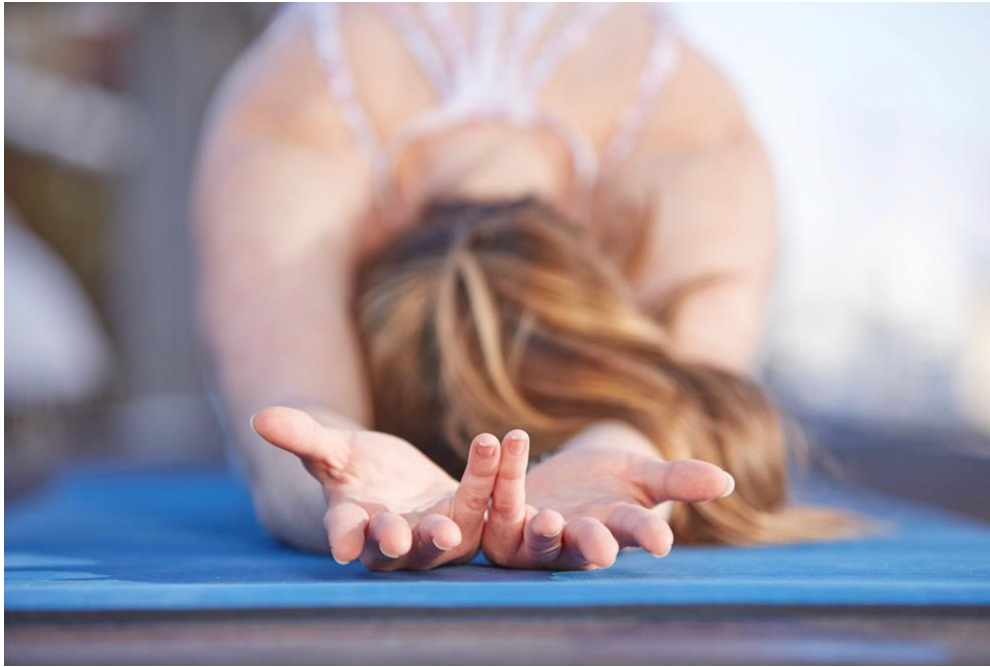


5 YOGA POSES TO RELIEVE STRESS



by: *Clarissa Thompson*

It's no secret that life can have its fair-share of stressors. From jobs, to family responsibility, commutes and more - sometimes it can feel difficult to schedule in even 5 minutes of time for **self-care**. Thankfully, that's where yoga can help! The practice of **Yoga** has lots of tools you can use to relieve stress in your life, even if it means taking a few moments in the morning or at the end of each day to practice a few poses. One of the chemical effects of stress in the body is when our bodies and minds flip into fight or flight mode, otherwise known as your sympathetic nervous system. This is when the heart rate quickens, the mind runs, and our breath becomes quick and shallow. This is not a state we can exist in for an extended length of time and so knowing how to calm your body and mind is a necessary tool that you can see great benefits from. Below are 5 yoga poses you can do to relieve stress in your life, you can do them individually or make a little sequence out of them!

FORWARD FOLD:



You can do this standing or seated. First start with deep breathing, slow your breath and take several long inhales and exhales. Next, if you want to do this seated, sit down on the floor with your legs extended and a slight bend in your knees. Slowly as you continue to breathe deeply, start to walk your hands out in front of you, don't worry about getting to your feet. As you lower your chest toward your thighs, **relax** your head and neck. You will then start to drop your head below your heart which will help your heart rate to slow and your mind to calm. You can also forward fold from standing either allowing your arms to dangle or grabbing opposite elbows for a position known as

rag doll. Forward fold is one of the fastest poses to bring you out of an acute stress response. Try it while taking 10 deep breaths.

EAGLE POSE:



This is a **balancing** pose that requires deep concentration, therefore it's hard for the body and mind to do anything else but focus on the present moment! Start by standing in Tadasana, feet hip-width apart and shoulders down and back. Pick something to look at and focus on during this pose, perhaps calming or pleasing to you. Slowly pick up your right leg and cross it over your left as if you were sitting cross legged in a chair. Then take your left arm and cross it over your right at the elbow creases. Start to bend your elbows bringing the back of the hands together. You can always deepen this pose by wrapping the arms and legs more, but find where you can maintain your balance and breath. Not only is this pose good for relieving stress but it helps to open and stretch the shoulders and hips which are points in the body that tend to carry a lot of **stress**. Be sure to do both sides and take at least 5 breaths on each side.

CAT/COW FLOW:



This is a short sequence where you flow your body between 2 poses, Cat Pose and Cow Pose. These poses combined offer relief for the spine and all the muscles in the back. It also helps to steady your breathing as you move which assists in calming the mind. From table top, knees under hips and wrists under shoulders, you want to start by engaging your deep abdominal muscles first. Then on an inhale start to sweep your chest forward opening up your throat and upper chest to the space in front of you while flaring your hips back behind and keeping that belly engaged. This is Cow Pose. For Cat Pose, on an exhale start rounding the spine toward the ceiling and allow that movement to happen all the way down the spine. Lift your upper, middle and lower spine and start drawing the

crown of your head down toward the floor. Keep the belly engaged as you continue to flow through Cat and Cow, breathing as you move. Move through this flow as long as it feels good.

CHILD'S POSE:



This pose is wonderful for stretching the low back and helping relieve tension through the hips. Modify it for your body by adding any **props** you wish. Starting from a table top position bring your big toes toward one another, they might even touch behind you and widen your knees out to the sides. Start to slowly push your hips back toward your heels and walk your hands out in front of you as you lower your chest and forehead to the floor. Relax your whole body down and if you need some extra relief in your shoulders and upper back, bend your elbows. You can always add a pillow under your belly or **blocks** under your forehead if you need some extra support as you relax and breathe. Start to follow your breath in and out and let go of any stress or tension. Stay here for 10 deep breaths or add props to stay longer.

LEGS UP THE WALL:



This is the perfect way to relax after a long day, allowing your hips and low back to take a break is something your body needs. This is also a great way to unwind before you go to bed and gives you a chance to let any racing in your mind dissipate. Find a space on a wall and lay down with your head facing away from the wall. Then, swing your legs up the wall and if you need support under your hips add a blanket or pillow. Make yourself as comfortable as possible, close your eyes and maybe even play some relaxing music. Allow your whole body and mind to let go of any stressful thoughts or worries. Be fully present in the moment as you relax and find calm. Stay here as long as you like.

Allowing yourself time during your busy day is essential to reducing stress. Each of these poses can be done on their own held for a few breaths or longer, or you can create a short flow doing each pose as many times as you like. The beautiful thing about Yoga is it teaches you about your body and helps you develop a sense of awareness around it. As you continue to practice you will start to recognize the symptoms of stress right when they start to happen and can quickly halt that stress response in its tracks. Keep breathing and practicing and finding time for yourself!

<https://www.gaiam.com/blogs/discover/5-yoga-poses-to-relieve-stress>

6 De-Stressing Yoga Poses to Help You Calm Down

Stress management doesn't have to be complicated.

By [Amy Marturana Winderl, C.P.T.](#)

I find exercise in general to be really stress-relieving—particularly boxing or [running](#), two activities that let me clear my head and refocus my thoughts and just take some time for me, mentally and physically. But when it comes to the most convenient de-stressing exercise, [yoga](#) is a clear winner. You don't have to use any special gear, or go anywhere. Plus, yoga's focus on breath and mind work can help calm racing thoughts.

"Yoga can be an excellent tool for self-regulation," [Amy Apgar](#), yoga instructor at Y7 Studio in New York City, tells SELF. When we're stressed, our sympathetic nervous system (the famed "flight or fight" response) kicks into high gear. A stressful trigger prompts our bodies to release stress hormones, causing a cascade of [physiological changes](#) like elevated heart rate, rapid breathing, and increased blood pressure—all of which are meant to get us amped up and ready to face that stressor. This is also what makes us feel really on-edge and high-strung. [Studies have shown](#) that yoga can be useful for managing stress.

Apgar suggests doing yoga regularly as a "preventive" practice. "Even [just honing your] ability to maintain slow, mindful breaths is a great tool for dealing with stress as it arises," she adds. Apgar recommends doing any of the yoga moves she demos below as often as you need to—whether that's daily to help [manage stress](#), or after you're feeling particularly frazzled to help you calm down.

Here's how to do each move:



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1 Cat/Cow

- Start on all fours with your shoulders over your wrists and hips over knees.
- Take a slow inhale, and on the exhale, round your spine and drop your head toward the floor (this is the “cat” posture).
- Inhale and lift your head, chest, and tailbone toward the ceiling as you arch your back for “cow.”
- Repeat as many times as you'd like (until you feel like your spine is moving comfortably).



Savanna Ruedy

2 Standing Forward Fold With Shoulder Stretch

- Stand with your feet wider than shoulder-width apart, and clasp your hands together by your butt.
- Fold forward from your hips and bring your chest toward your legs and head toward the floor, keeping your lower back flat as you move. Let your arms follow your head.
- Hold for at least five slow deep breaths.

"If you cannot clasp your hands behind you, you can hold onto a strap or towel instead," Apgar says. "If you have any low-back sensitivity or tight hamstrings, definitely bend your knees in your forward fold!"



Savanna Ruedy

3 Seated Forward Fold

- a. Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you
- b. Fold forward at your hips and grab onto the arches of your feet with each hand.
- c. Lower your chest toward your legs, and try to keep your knees as straight as you can. If your hamstrings are super tight, bending your knees a bit will help you lower your chest further.
- d. Hold for at least five slow deep breaths.



Savanna Ruedy

4 Shoulder Stand

- Lie faceup with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Roll back onto your shoulders, one vertebra at a time. Let your feet fall behind your head.

- Then, slowly lift your legs, one at a time, straight above you, so that they're in line with your back. Use your hands to help support your upper body (as shown). This will help take some of the weight off your neck, Apgar says.
- Hold for at least five slow deep breaths, and then lower your legs back behind your head before rolling back to starting position.

If you're new to this move, try it against a wall to support your legs, be sure to support your neck, and go through the move cautiously. "Keep your head centered, and come out of the pose if you get any pain or discomfort in your neck," says Apgar.



Savanna Ruedy

5 Happy Baby

- Lie faceup with both knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Lift your feet off the floor and grab the outside edges of your feet with your hands.
- Gently pull your feet toward your chest and let your knees lower toward the floor on either side of your body. Keep your back flat on the floor.
- Hold for at least five slow deep breaths.



Savanna Ruedy

6 Savasana

- Lie faceup with your legs about shoulder-width apart and your arms out by your sides a few inches from your body.
- Let your entire body relax, and focus on breathing slowly and deeply from your chest.
- Lie here as long as you'd like, but at least for five slow, deep breaths.

<https://www.self.com/gallery/de-stressing-yoga-poses-to-help-you-calm-down>