

Yoga and Spinal Health



Introduction

What is the spine?

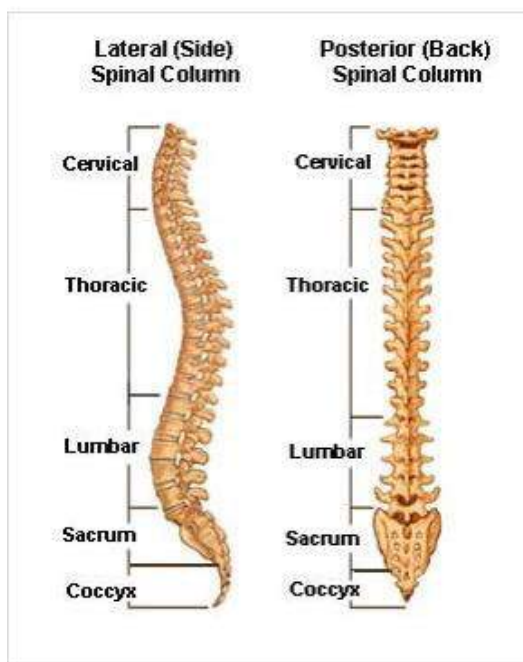
Your spine, or backbone, is your body's central support structure. It connects different parts of your musculoskeletal system. Your spine helps you sit, stand, walk, twist and bend.

The column of bone known as the vertebral column surrounds and protects the spinal cord. The spine can be categorized according to level of the body: i.e., cervical spine (neck), thoracic spine (upper and middle back), and lumbar spine (lower back).

Back injuries, spinal cord conditions and other problems can damage the spine and cause back pain

What are the spine segments?

The 33 vertebrae make up five distinct spine segments. Starting at the neck and going down toward your buttocks (rear end), these segments include:



- **Cervical (neck):** The top part of the spine has seven vertebrae (C1 to C7). These neck vertebrae allow you to turn, tilt and nod your head.
- **Thoracic (middle back):** The chest or thoracic part of the spine has 12 vertebrae (T1 to T12). Your ribs attach to the thoracic spine. This section of the spine bends out slightly to make a backward C-shape called the kyphotic curve.
- **Lumbar (lower back):** Five vertebrae (L1 to L5) make up the lower part of the spine. Your lumbar spine supports the upper parts of the spine. It connects to the pelvis and bears most of your body's weight, as well as the stress of lifting and carrying items. Many back problems occur in the lumbar spine.
- **Sacrum:** This triangle-shaped bone connects to the hips. The five sacral vertebrae (S1 to S5) fuse as a baby develops in the womb, which means they don't move. The sacrum and hip bones form a ring called the pelvic girdle.
- **Coccyx (tailbone):** Four fused vertebrae make up this small piece of bone found at the bottom of the spine. Pelvic floor muscles and ligaments attach to the coccyx.

What are the parts of the spine?

A healthy spine has three natural curves that make an S-shape. These curves absorb shocks to your body and protect your spine from injury. Many different parts make up your spine:

- **Vertebrae:** The spine has 33 stacked vertebrae (small bones) that form the spinal canal. The spinal canal is a tunnel that houses the spinal cord and nerves, protecting them from injury. Most vertebrae move to allow for a range of motion. The lowest vertebrae (sacrum and coccyx) are fused together and don't move.
- **Facet joints:** These spinal joints have cartilage (a slippery connective tissue) that allows vertebrae to slide against each other. Facet joints let you twist and turn, and they provide

flexibility and stability. These joints can develop arthritis and cause back pain or neck pain.

- **Intervertebral disks:** These flat, round cushions sit between the vertebrae and act as the spine's shock absorbers. Each disk has a soft, gel-like center (the nucleus pulposus) surrounded by a flexible outer ring (the annulus). Intervertebral disks are under constant pressure. A herniated disk can tear, allowing some of the nucleus' gel substance to leak out. Herniated disks (also called bulging, slipped or ruptured disks) can be painful.
- **Spinal cord and nerves:** The spinal cord is a column of nerves that travels through the spinal canal. The cord extends from the skull to the lower back. Thirty-one pairs of nerves branch out through vertebral openings (the neural foramen). These nerves carry messages between the brain and muscles.
- **Soft tissues:** Ligaments connect the vertebrae to hold the spine in position. Muscles support the back and help you move. Tendons connect muscles to bone and aid movement.

Spinal Disc and Pain

Spinal discs are located in between each of the vertebral bodies along the back bone and may also be referred to as an intervertebral disc, spinal disc, or disk.

As a disc degenerates, the soft inner gel in the disc can leak back into the spinal canal. This is known as disc herniation, or **herniated disc**. Once inside the spinal canal, the herniated disc material then puts pressure on the nerve, causing pain to radiate down the nerve leading to **sciatica** or leg pain (from a **lumbar herniated disc**) or arm pain (from a **cervical herniated disc**).

Some Common Reason for Spinal Pain:

According to research up to 80% of people experience back pain at some point. Vertebrae and disks can wear down with age, causing pain. Other common conditions that affect spine health include:

- Bad posture while sitting or standing

- Incorrect breathing pattern
- Less water intake
- Poor diet and life style
- Not enough Rest
- Less sunlight exposure
- More workload and tension
- Injury
- Chronic Disease like Arthritis

Types of Spinal Movement

There are four types of possible movement of spine has been observed.

- Flexion (forward Bend)
- Extension (Tadasana)
- Axial Rotation
- Cervical Rotation(Side Bend)

How yoga helps for Back Pain

In today's time, our lifestyle leaves our back vulnerable to pain on account of bad posture. Yoga helps increase strength in very specific muscles and muscle groups. Holding positions in yoga is not intended to be uncomfortable. However, it does require concentration and specific use of muscles throughout the body. Muscle strength improves by remaining in these yoga positions and incorporating various movements.

Many of the postures in yoga gently strengthen the muscles in the back, as well as the abdominal muscles. Back and abdominal muscles are essential components of the muscular network of the spine, helping the body maintain proper upright posture and movement. When these muscles are well conditioned, back pain can be greatly reduced or avoided.

Here are some points how yoga helps in improving spinal health

- Improves postures
- Strengthen Muscles

- Increase flexibility
- Increase Breath Awareness
- Increase Body Awareness
- Decrease Tension
- More core stability to support Spine

Dynamic movement

Cat and cow



- Begin in Child's Pose. Take 5 long deep full breaths here, slowing your breaths to a 4-count inhale and a 4-count exhale.
- On the next inhale, rise up to your hands and knees, with your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips and with a long, neutral spine.
- As you inhale, lift your tailbone and drop your belly as you look up, drooping your spine into Cow Pose.
- As you exhale, draw your tailbone in and round your spine, dropping your chin toward your chest as you pull your belly in and arch your spine into Cat Pose

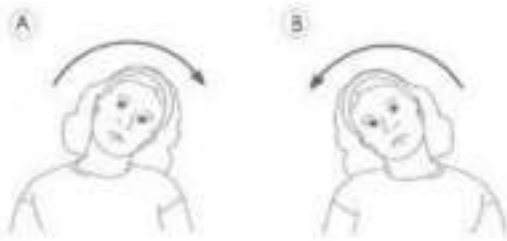
Neck Movement

Practicing yoga is an excellent way to get rid of neck pain. One study found yoga to provide pain relief and functional improvements in neck for people

who did yoga for nine weeks. Through the practice, you can learn to release any tension you're holding in your body.

Yoga may be useful in treating even chronic neck pain.

Ear-to-shoulder stretch



- Sit in sukhansana or sit on a chair with an erect back and relaxed shoulders placing hands on the knees.
- Take your right hand and place the palm over the left ear.
- Gently push your head tilting it towards the right until your right ear touches the right shoulder.
- Then bring the head back to the center and release your hand.
- Repeat the same on your left switching the hands

Eagle arms pose with chin tilt



- Assume a comfortable seated pose.
- Bring your arms in front and hook the right elbow in the left elbow's crook.

- Tangle and squeeze the arms such that the palms are joined in front of the face.
- Now, try to tilt your chin towards the chest slightly.
- Hold it for a while and then release the neck and arms. Do it for 5 times.
- Repeat with other hand

Thread the needle pose



- Begin in table-top position bringing the knees under the hips and wrists under the shoulders.
- Lift your right hand off the floor and pass it to the left under the left arm with right palm facing up.
- Press your left palm against the floor and pass the right arm to the left until the right shoulder comes to the floor.
- Simultaneously turn your neck and rest it over the neck roll to look towards the left.
- Hold the pose as such for 30 seconds and then come up to rest in child's pose for a few breaths.
- Repeat it on the other side.

Cow-face pose



- Begin in a comfortable seated pose or by crossing the legs stacking the knees pointing the feet to the sides.
- Hold a yoga strap with your left hand and raise the left arm bending the elbow pointed upward hanging strap behind the back.
- Take your right arm behind your back bending the elbow pointing down and grasp the lower end of the strap with the right hand.
- Try to keep the hands as close as possible to enhance the stretch. Now change hand and repeat 4 to 6 times with alternate hand
- Then release and repeat it by switching the legs position

Side Bending pose

Triangle Pose



- Begin standing at the top of your mat with your feet hip-distance apart and your arms at your sides.
- Step or hop your feet wide apart, about 4 to 5 feet.
- Turn your right foot out 90 degrees so your toes are pointing to the top of the mat. Center your right knee over your right ankle. Pivot your left foot slightly inward so your back toes are at a 45-degree angle.
- Inhale and raise your arms out to the sides in line with your shoulders, so they're parallel to the ground and aligned directly over your legs. With your palms facing down, reach actively from fingertip to fingertip.
- As you inhale, reach forward with your right hand and draw your left hip back. Deepen the crease of your right hip and release your right hand down to your shin or a block placed behind your right shin. Turn your left palm forward, with your finger tips reaching toward the sky, and twist your chest open toward the sky. Soften your left hip down slightly.
- Gently turn your head to gaze up at your right hand. Draw your chin in toward your throat to lengthen the back of your neck.
- Stay and breathe for up to 5 breaths, opening the chest on each inhale and drawing your ribs and navel in on each exhale.
- Inhale to stand and repeat on the other side.

Twisting Asanas

Standing: **Twisted Triangle**



- Begin in Mountain Pose (here) with your feet hip-distance apart. Step your left foot behind you about 3 to 4 feet and

release your left heel to the ground. Adjust your feet as needed so the heels of your front and back feet are aligned.

- Place your right hand on your right hip and inhale to lift your left arm to the sky. Draw your right hip back as you reach forward with your left hand. Twist over and down toward your right foot. Place a block on the outside of your right foot and adjust it to any height you need, then place your left hand flat on the block. (If this is too uncomfortable, move the block to the inside of your right foot instead.) Rotate your chest and torso to the right, opening your right shoulder toward the sky as you draw your right hip back. Reach your right arm straight up in line with your left and look up. If this hurts your neck, look down at the ground instead.
- Stay here for 5 breaths, inhaling to release a little and exhaling to twist deeper from your navel. Press down into your feet to rise up to stand and step forward into Mountain Pose before switching your feet

Twisted Parswakona



- Begin in Mountain Pose (here) at the top of your mat. Inhale your arms up and exhale over your legs into a Standing Forward Bend (here). As you inhale, reach your left leg back behind you into a Low Lunge (here). Exhale as you bring your left knee to the ground, and inhale as you raise your arms up on either side of your head into a modified High Lunge.
- Stack the joints by making sure your right knee is in line with your right ankle. This is important for stability. Place your left knee under your left hip.

- Bring your hands together at your heart as if in prayer and begin to twist from the navel, hooking your left elbow to the outside of your right knee. Draw your right shoulder back to open your chest, and draw your thumbs to the center of your chest.
- You can keep your left knee on the ground for balance, or tuck your toes under and lift your knee off the ground, drawing the right hip back. You can stay with your hands in prayer or open your arms wide with your left hand toward the ground and your right arm opening up toward the sky.^{5 6 7} Take your gaze up and stay for 5 breaths. The inhale will be a bit constrained because of the twist, but you can release a bit to breathe in.

Sitting:

Ardha Matsyendra



- Begin by sitting on your mat with your legs crossed. Place the sole of your right foot on the ground with your knee pointing up toward the sky, keeping the left leg open on the mat. Sit up tall, hugging your right shin into your chest.
- Now cross your right leg over your left. Place the sole of your right foot outside your left thigh and your left foot on the outside edge of your right buttock.
- Inhale while you lift your arms up above your head and exhale while you twist to the right, placing your left elbow on the outside your right knee, index finger and thumb together, and your right fingertips on the ground^{4 5 6 7} behind you. Look back behind your right shoulder.

- Inhale to lengthen your spine and exhale to twist deeper, spiraling from your center. Draw your right hip down and reach the crown of your head up toward the sky.
- Tuck your chin in slightly to lengthen the back of your neck and roll your shoulders back to lift your chest.
- Stay here for 5 to 8 breaths. When you're ready to release, do a counter twist to the left, releasing your head toward the ground on the outside of your left hip to flood the right side of your body with prana, or life force, and to flush out the internal organs.
- Repeat on the left side.

Bharadwaj Asana



- Begin in a seated position with your legs crossed. Place the sole of your left foot on the ground and reach for your left ankle. Slide the top of this ankle down and back and place the top of your foot on the ground. Adjust yourself so that your heel is outside your left hip and your thigh is pointing forward. This puts you into half of a Hero's Pose.
- Roll your right thigh and hip open as you draw your left inner thigh down and roll onto your right hip slightly.
- Inhale your arms up toward the sky and twist to the right as you exhale, placing your right fingertips to the ground behind you and your left hand on your right knee.
- Twist all the way to the right. Lift your chest by wrapping your shoulder blades around your upper spine and drawing your shoulders down.

- Keep your chest open and twisting to the right, but look past your left shoulder and down to lengthen the right side of your neck. Stay here for 5 to 8 breaths, inhaling to lift your chest and lengthen your spine, and exhaling to ground your hips and twist deeper from the navel.
- When you're ready to release, do a counter twist to the left, and then switch leg

Supine:
Jathar Parivrtasana



- Begin by lying on your back and hugging your knees to your chest. Take a few breaths here to allow your body to sink into the ground, releasing your lower back.
- Keeping your knees together, press the outside of your right knee with your left hand to push both knees toward the ground on your left side, twisting as you exhale. Inhale to open your right arm wide out to the side in line with your right shoulder. Release your right ear toward the ground and gaze out past your right hand.
- If your knees do not easily come to the ground, place a folded blanket or 4 5 block under your left knee. Try to keep both shoulders on the ground.
- Stay here for 8 to 10 breaths, twisting and releasing deeper with each exhale.
- Bring your knees back up together and hug them to your chest for a couple of breaths, before releasing your knees to the right and twisting to the left.

Relaxing Asanas

Mountain



- Come on to your hands and knees with your hands directly under your shoulders and with your knees under your hips. Root down through your thumb and index finger as you roll your shoulders back and away from your ears. Tuck your toes under and lift your hips to the sky as you lengthen your legs behind you and draw your heels toward the ground.
- Bend your knees slightly. Draw your chest toward your thighs to stretch open your shoulders and lengthen your neck. Then slowly straighten your legs again as you continue to press your hands into the ground, and release (relax) your head between your arms.
- Keep your gaze between your feet. Take 5 deep breaths. As you exhale, push your heels closer to the ground. Release into Child's Pose

Child's Pose



- Come on to your hands and knees. Send your hips back toward your heels, laying your chest on the tops of your thighs. Stretch your arms forward and rest your head on the ground with your eyes closed. Another variation is to stretch your arms back by your sides and release your hands by your heels for a deeper restorative experience.

- Take 5 long, deep breaths, slowing down to a 4-count inhale and a 4-count exhale. With each exhale, send your sit bones down toward your heels to release the lower back.

Extended Puppy Pose



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- To start the posture, Place your all fours in the table position, with your hips directly over the knees.
 - While doing so, keep your shoulders over the wrists.
 - Exhale, and slowly walk your hands forward towards the corner of the yoga mat until your hips and knees come perpendicular.
 - Don't allow the knees to spread wider than the hips; it can cause compression in the sacrum.
 - Active your arms by pressing into the palms and lifting your elbows away from the ground.
 - Make sure that you don't let your elbows spread out and your shoulders inward.
 - Allow your neck to relax and lengthen your spine in both directions.
 - Hold the pose for 6-7 breaths and then slowly lift your forehead and walk back towards the body to come in table position.

Side Bend Asanas- **Traingle Pose**



- Begin standing at the top of your mat with your feet hip-distance apart and your arms at your sides. Step or hop your feet wide apart, about 4 to 5 feet.
- Turn your right foot out 90 degrees so your toes are pointing to the top of the mat. Center your right knee over your right ankle. Pivot your left foot slightly inward so your back toes are at a 45-degree angle.
- Inhale and raise your arms out to the sides in line with your shoulders, so they're parallel to the ground and aligned directly over your legs. With your palms facing down, reach actively from fingertip to fingertip. As you inhale, reach forward with your right hand and draw your left hip back.
- Deepen the crease of your right hip and release your right hand down to your shin or a block placed behind your right shin.
- Turn your left palm forward, with your finger tips reaching toward the sky, and twist your chest open toward the sky. Soften your left hip down slightly. Gently turn your head to gaze up at your right hand.
- Draw your chin in toward your throat to lengthen the back of your neck. Stay and breathe for up to 5 breaths, opening the chest on each inhale and drawing your ribs and navel in on each exhale. Inhale to stand and repeat on the other side.

Backbend Asans-

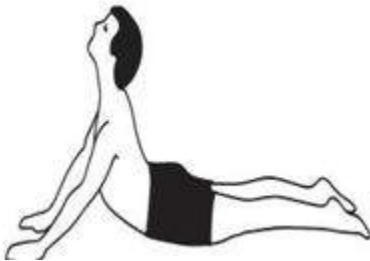
Sphinx or Half cobra



- Begin by lying facedown on the ground. Draw your legs together. Bend your elbows and place your hands by your upper ribs. Draw your elbows toward each other to lift the shoulders. Press strongly into your hands to lift your head, shoulders, and chest off the ground as you inhale.

- Keep your chin slightly down to lengthen the back of your neck. Turn your gaze upward between your eyebrows.
- Stay for about 3 breaths, pressing your weight into your hands and the tops of your feet.

Cobra



- Begin by lying facedown on the ground. Bend your elbows and slide your hands down so they're in line with your bottom ribs. Press down into your hands and the tops of your feet and straighten your arms, lifting your head, chest, abdomen, pelvis, and thighs off the ground.
- Draw your shoulders away from your ears as you press down through your thumbs and index fingers. Move your chest forward and up between your arms, and press your pelvis down to lengthen your spine. Lower your chin slightly to protect your neck as you take your gaze up.
- This is an intense pose, so take 1 to 5 breaths before slowly exhaling back into Downward-Facing Dog ([here](#)) or Child's Pose ([here](#)). If you don't yet have the flexibility to accomplish this pose as described, you can place blocks under your hands to bring the ground to you.

Camel



1. Kneel with body upright and hips stacked over the knees. Take padding (a blanket or fold your mat so it is double thickness) under your knees if they are sensitive.
2. Draw your hands up the side of your body until your palms reach the sides of your rib cage. Let your thumbs rest on the back of the ribs as the other four fingers wrap around the sides and fronts of the rib cage with elbows pointing out. With this grip, use your hands to lift the rib cage up for support as you start to open your chest toward the ceiling.
3. Maintain the position of your chest as you reach your hands back one at a time to grasp your heels. If you need a little more height, tuck your toes under. Otherwise, the tops of the feet can be flat on the floor.
4. Bring your hips forward so that they stay over your knees.
5. If it feels good, let your head come back, opening your throat. If that doesn't work for your neck, you can keep the chin tucked instead.
6. Release by bringing your chin toward your chest and hands to your hips. Firm your abs and support your lower back with your hands as you slowly bring your body to an upright kneeling position.

Bridge



- Lie down on your back and bend your knees with your feet hip-distance apart and your heels close to your buttocks. Place your arms by your sides. Widen your heels and turn your toes in slightly. This widens the sacrum and narrows the hip points to protect your lower back from injury.
- Root down into the mounds of your big toes. Inhale to lift your hips and chest up toward the sky, keeping your feet anchored and your knees pressing toward each other. Scoot your shoulders under you to widen your chest and interlace your

fingers, drawing your palms together under your spine. Press down into the ground with your arms and feet to lift up your pelvis and chest.

- Allow your gaze to focus on your heart center. Deepen your breathing into your chest, expanding your rib cage for 5 breaths.
- When you're ready to come down, release your hips to the ground and drop your knees toward each other to ease the lower back. You can slowly swing your knees from side to side to gently massage your spine.

Wheel Pose



- Lie down on your back and bend your knees with your feet hip-distance apart and your heels close to your buttocks. Place your arms by your sides. Widen your heels and draw your toes in slightly. This widens the sacrum and narrows the hip points to protect your lower back from injury.
- Reach your arms straight up and bend your elbows to plant the palms of your hands on the ground on either side of your head. Place your fingers under the tips of your shoulders and point your elbows straight up.
- Exhale to root down into your feet and hands, and rise up to the crown of your head, drawing your elbows in and keeping them in line with your shoulders. Breathe in and draw your knees directly over your ankles. Exhale to press down equally into your hands and feet to straighten your arms and legs.

- Keep drawing your knees and elbows in, and feel free to walk your feet toward your hands until you feel equal weight on your hands and feet.
- Drop your gaze back to the ground between your hands, and stay here for up to 5 breaths. Release down by first drawing your chin into your chest to lengthen the back of your neck, and then slowly placing the back of your head on the ground, followed by your upper back, middle back, and lower back.
- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your heart, and feel the energy pulsing through your body. Avoid drawing your knees straight into your chest as a counter pose because it's too extreme, especially if you plan on repeating the pose.
- Repeat one or two more times, before slowly swinging your knees from side to side to neutralize and massage your spine.

Locust pose



- Begin by lying facedown on your mat. Place a blanket under your hip bones if they're sensitive. Place your arms down on the ground by your sides and your forehead to the ground with your chin tucked in toward your chest.
- Press down with the tops of your feet and hamstrings and stretch your arms back toward your feet, and begin to lift your head, shoulders, chest, and upper ribs off the ground. Keep your chin tucked slightly in to protect your neck.
- Lift your legs off the ground using your inner thighs, and stretch your body up by pressing your pelvis and belly down.

- Stay here for 3 to 5 breaths, with your gaze on the ground a few inches in front of you. Draw your legs into each other and widen your chest by drawing your shoulder blades back and closer together. When you're ready, lower down to the mat with your cheek to one side

Bow Pose



- Begin by lying facedown on your mat, placing a blanket under your hip bones if they're sensitive. Place your arms down by your sides and your forehead down on the ground with your chin toward your chest. Draw your pubic bone up to your navel and your tailbone down toward your feet to lengthen and protect your lower back.
- Bend your knees, bringing your heels up and back toward your buttocks. Reach back with your hands for your ankles, rolling your upper arms out and keeping your knees hip-distance apart.
- Flex your feet and press your ankles into your hands, using your legs to lift your chest off the ground.
- Shift your weight onto your belly and lift your thighs, lifting your legs and chest higher up as you press down into your belly and draw your tailbone down.
- The breath will be a bit labored, but do your best to not hold your breath here. Stay for 5 breaths, inhaling to rise a little more and exhaling to release for 5 breaths. Rest before rising up one or two more times.

- Come out of the pose by sliding your hands back alongside your rib cage and pressing your hips toward your heels into Child's Pose

Core Strengthening Asanas

Core strength is important for stronger back. When the core muscle gets stronger it gives more strength to the back muscle.

Plank Hold



- Begin in Plank Pose (here). Reach your heels back to activate your legs, and reach forward with your chest by drawing your shoulders up and away from your ears.
- Lift your ribs and navel up and draw your tailbone in to support your lower back.
- Bend your elbows by your sides and lower down to about 3 inches from the ground while continuing to lift your navel and front body. This is a challenging pose. Hold for 1 to 3 breaths, or for as long as you can, with your gaze about 6 inches in front of you. Then drop down or move into Baby Cobra (here) or Upward-Facing Dog (here).

Boat Pose



- Begin in a seated position on your mat. Hug your knees into your chest with your hands under your knees, balancing on your sit bones. Lift your shins parallel with the ground, and lean back a bit with your hands supporting the backs of your knees
- Lift your chest up and shoulders back into a supported Boat Pose.
- Shift your weight slightly forward to the fronts of your sit bones, and straighten your legs as far as they'll extend. Let go of your legs, and reach your arms forward in line with your knees.
- Look forward and stay here for 5 breaths, feeling your aliveness! You'll experience some shaking, which is totally normal. Use your abdominal muscles to stay lifted rather than your back muscles, shoulders, or neck, and release your jaw.

Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is a powerful, ancient form of guided meditation that induces relaxation and healing of the body, mind and spirit.

Each time you practice yoga nidra meditation, you're stilling the waves of the mind through conscious entry into the sleep state. You start with sensing the body and breathing in specific ways in order to trigger the relaxation response. The relaxation response balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and balances the left and right brain. Relaxing the brain helps releasing the stress from spine also

Preparation: Please get ready for yoga nidra. Lie down on your back on the floor and adopt the pose called shavasana. In this position the body should be straight from head to toe, the legs slightly apart and the arms a little away from the body, with the palms of the hands turned upwards, (pause) Adjust everything, your body, position and clothes, until you are completely comfortable. During yoga nidra there should be no physical movement, (pause) Close your eyes and keep them strictly closed until you are told to open them. Take a deep breath and as you breathe out feel the cares and worries of the day flow out of you. (pause) In the practice which follows you are going to develop the feeling of relaxation in the body. It is

not necessary to make movements or deliberately relax your muscles, simply develop the feeling of relaxation, (pause) It is like the feeling you have just before sleep...when relaxation becomes deep, sleep does come but you should try to keep yourself completely awake, this is very important. Make a resolution to yourself now that 'I will not sleep, I will remain awake throughout the practice.' (pause) During yoga nidra you are functioning on the levels of hearing and awareness, and the only important thing is to follow the voice of the instructor, (pause) You must not try to intellectualize or analyze the instructions as this will disturb your mental relaxation. Simply follow the voice with total attention and feeling, and if thoughts come to disturb you from time to time, do not worry, just continue the practice, (pause) Allow yourself to become calm and steady...when you are doing the practice yourself, allow five minutes for this. Do not start too suddenly, (pause)

Relaxation: Now bring about a feeling of inner relaxation in the whole body...concentrate on the body and become aware of the importance of complete stillness, (pause) Develop your awareness of the body from the top of the head to the tips of the toes and mentally repeat the mantra O-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Complete stillness and complete awareness of the whole body...again O-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Continue your awareness of the whole body...the whole body...the whole body, (long pause) Become aware of the fact that you are going to practice yoga nidra...say mentally to yourself, 'I am aware...I am going to practice yoga nidra...repeat this to yourself again, (pause) The practice of yoga nidra begins now.

Resolve: At this moment you should make your resolve. (pause) The resolve will have to be very simple...try to discover one naturally. You must develop a resolve to say at this time, (pause) It should be a short, positive statement in simple language...stated three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis, (pause) The resolve you make during yoga nidra is bound to come true in your life, (pause)

Rotation of consciousness: We now begin rotation of consciousness, rotation of awareness by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and simultaneously become aware of that part of the body. Keep yourself alert but do not concentrate too intensely. Become aware of the right hand, (pause)

Right side: Right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, become aware of your palm, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe...

Left side: Become aware of the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe...

Back: Now to the back. Become aware of the right shoulderblade, the left shoulder blade...the right buttock, the left buttock...the spine...the whole back together... Front: Now go to the top of the head. The top of the head, the forehead, both sides of the head, the right eyebrow, the left eyebrow, the space between the eyebrows, the right eyelid, the left eyelid, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the nose, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right chest, the left chest, the middle of the chest, the navel, the abdomen...

Major parts: The whole of the right leg... the whole of the left leg...both legs together, (pause) The whole of the right arm...the whole of the left arm...both arms together. (pause) The whole of the back, buttocks, spine, shoulderblades...the whole of the front, abdomen, chest...the whole of the back and front...together...the whole of the head...the whole body together...the whole body together... the whole body together. Repeat one or two rounds gradually decreasing speed. Please do not sleep...total awareness...no sleeping...no movement, (pause) The whole body on the floor, become aware of your body lying on the floor, (pause) Your body is lying on the floor, see your body lying perfectly still on the floor, in this room, (pause) Visualize this image in your mind, (long pause).

Breathing: Become aware of your breath, (pause) Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs, (pause) Do not try to change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic...you are not doing it, there is no effort, (pause) Maintain awareness of your breath, continue...complete awareness

of breath, (long pause) Now concentrate your awareness on the movement of your navel area...concentrate on your navel movements. (pause) Your navel is rising and falling slightly with every breath, with each and every breath it expands and contracts...concentrate on this movement in synchronization with your breath, (pause) Go on practicing, but be sure that you are aware, (long pause) Now start counting your breaths backwards from 27 to 1, like this: 27 navel rising, 27 navel falling, 26 navel rising, 26 navel falling, 25 navel rising, 25 navel falling, and so on. Say the words and numbers mentally to yourself as you count your breaths, (pause) Be sure that you don't make a mistake; if you do, you must go back to 27 and start again, (long pause) With total awareness that you are counting, go on counting from 27 to 1. (long pause) Keep on with the practice...no mistakes, (long pause) Now stop your counting of the navel breath and shift your attention to the chest, please shift to the chest. (pause) Your chest is rising and falling slightly with each and every breath, become aware of this, (pause) Continue concentrating on the movement of the chest and start counting backwards from 27 to 1, in the same way as before...27 chest rising, 27 chest falling, 26 chest rising, 26 chest falling, 25 chest rising, 25 chest falling, and so on. Again repeat the words and numbers mentally to yourself as you count, (long pause) No mistakes, if you make a mistake you must go back to the start again, to 27. (long pause) Continue counting, 27 to 1, keep on with the practice, counting and awareness, awareness and counting, (long pause) Cease your counting of the chest breaths and move your awareness to the throat, please move to the throat, (pause) Become aware of your breath moving in and out of the throat...become aware of this, (pause) Concentrate on the movement of the breath and start counting backwards from 27 to 1 in the same way as before...complete awareness of counting and the breath, (long pause) No sleeping please, just total awareness that you are counting, (long pause) Keep on with the practice, continue counting your breaths in the throat, (long pause) Stop counting and go now to the nostrils...become aware of the breath moving in and out of the nostrils, (pause) Concentrate on the movement of the breath in and out of the nostrils and start counting as before, you know it very well by now, 27 breathing in, 27 breathing out. (long pause) Complete awareness please, continue counting, no mistakes, (long pause) Keep on with the practice, continue, (long pause). Stop counting.

Resolve: Now is the time to repeat your resolve...repeat the same resolve that you made at the beginning of the practice, do not change it...repeat the resolve three times with full awareness and feeling, (pause)

Finish: Relax all efforts, draw your mind outside and become aware of your breathing...become aware of the natural breath, (pause) Awareness of the whole body, and awareness of breathing, (pause) Your body is lying totally relaxed on the floor...you are breathing quietly and slowly, (pause) Develop awareness of your body from the top of the head to the tips of the toes and say mentally in your mind O-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Repeat O-o-o-m-m-m mentally to yourself twice more, (pause) Become aware of the floor, and the position of your body lying on the floor... visualize the room around you, become aware of your surroundings. (pause) Lie quietly for some time and keep your eyes closed, (pause) Start moving your body and stretching yourself. Please take your time, do not hurry, (pause) When you are sure that you are wide awake, sit up slowly and open your eyes. The practice of yoga nidra is now complete.