

Chair Yoga Instructor's Handbook



By Isabelle Cunningham

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Teachers are advised to use caution while delivering programs to students, obtain public liability insurance and ensure elderly, injured and disabled students have medical clearances from their own doctor before participating. Never manipulate a student's body.

INTRODUCTION

This e-book has been designed as a resource for teaching Chair Yoga and Meditation classes. It is intended for use by practitioners who have completed the Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Human Development. It is also intended as a study resource for students participating in the Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Counselling as part of the Chair Yoga component.

Chair Yoga and meditation classes are suitable for seniors and people with disabilities who are limited from practicing conventional Yoga.

Chair Yoga delivers similar benefits to the practice of other styles of Yoga and provides people who may otherwise be unable to practice Yoga an opportunity to enjoy the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that Yoga has to offer.

Chair Yoga and meditation classes are usually offered as an ongoing, open class on a weekly or twice weekly basis. The contents and structure of each class is the same; the Yoga postures practiced are the same and the only thing that changes from class to class is the affirmations used in the meditations and sometimes the meditation itself.

Teachers should select a variety of chair Yoga postures from the group of postures to use for each session to provide interest and variation. It is not intended that all of the postures contained in this book should be used in any one session.

This assists participants to learn Yoga postures, relaxation techniques and meditations through repetitiveness so the advancement achieved for students is through improvement of the same postures, rather than continually learning new postures.

With open ended classes, new students can join the class at any time or miss classes as is sometimes necessary for seniors and those who are unwell or disabled, without falling behind.

Students learn a routine they can practice at home between classes; this empowers students to use the skills they are learning in class and take responsibility for their own development.

Students of all different levels and capabilities can share the same class.



WHAT IS YOGA

In its traditional form Yoga is a spiritual life path.

Yoga can be traced back as far as around 3000 BC. The earliest reference to Yoga was found during archaeological excavations in the Indus valley where findings from two of the largest cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, revealed a portrait of a human being or perhaps a God meditating in what looks like a Yoga posture.

The Rig-Veda work, that describes different Yoga methods, is believed to be derived from the Inus-Sarasvati people and has been dated to 3000 to 5000 BC.

Yoga as we know it today is therefore the result of an intricate evolution that has been going on for at least 5000 years. However, according to most scholars, Yoga cannot be recognized as a complete tradition before about 500 BC.

In the West today, Yoga has become incredibly popular as a purely physical exercise routine often completely divorced of its original purpose, which was spiritual enlightenment (being through being.) But the traditional practice can still to be found in India.

The guru-shishya (teacher-student) relationship that exists without need for sanction from non-religious educational institutions and which gave rise to all the great yogis who helped Yoga make its way into international consciousness in the 20th century, has been maintained in India, Nepal and Tibet.

In India, where the Hindu population is around 800 million, Yoga is a commonly used word. It is normal to see people practicing Sūrya namaskāra, a yogic set of asanas (poses) or pranayam (dedicated to Surya, the Sun) in the morning or various body therapies based on Yoga.

While most people do not necessarily practice Yoga in its total or pure form, many people have practices and beliefs that have been originally derived from Yoga. For Hindu holy-men, Yoga is a fundamental part of life as a spiritual practice.

Most of the Yoga taught in the Western World today focuses less on the spiritual aspects of Yoga and more on the physical, mental and emotional benefits of regular practice that Yoga offers. This is a great thing in our multicultural world full of people from an infinite collection of religious backgrounds because it means all people can enjoy the benefits of Yoga regardless of their spiritual path.

THE BENEFITS OF YOGA

Yoga is a science that consists of ancient theories, observations and principles about the mind/body connection which is now being proven by modern medicine. Substantial research has been conducted to look at the health benefits of Yoga; from the Yoga Postures (Asanas), Yoga Breathing (Pranayama) and meditation.

Some information on the known health benefits of Yoga is listed below in three categories; physiological, psychological and biochemical effects. Scientists have compared these results against the benefits of regular exercise.

Regardless of any persons own religious viewpoint, the practice of Yoga cannot help but contribute to a spiritual advancement because it improves the overall health of both mind and body and allows calm and positive space in hectic modern lifestyles to be at peace. It can therefore be considered a spiritual or religious practice but one that is individual to the person practicing the Yoga because it can take the practitioner to a place of spiritual or religious reflection without any external dogma.

It is said the body is a temple. We might consider this particularly during the practice of Yoga: The body becomes a place of worship but the nature of that worship is open to the practitioner's personal belief system.

Physiological benefits of yoga

- Stabilizes autonomic nervous system equilibrium
- Pulse rate decreases
- Respiratory rate decreases
- Blood Pressure decreases
- Galvanic Skin Response increases
- EEG - alpha waves increase (theta, delta, and beta waves also increase during various stages of meditation)
- Cardiovascular efficiency increases
- Respiratory efficiency increases
- Gastrointestinal function normalizes
- Endocrine function normalizes
- Excretory functions improve
- Musculoskeletal flexibility and joint range of motion increase
- Lung capacity increases
- Joint range of motion increase
- Grip strength increases
- Eye-hand coordination improves
- Dexterity skills improve
- Reaction time improves
- Posture improves
- Strength and resiliency increase
- Endurance increases
- Energy level increases
- Weight normalizes
- Sleep improves

- Immunity increases
- Pain decreases
- Steadiness and balance improves
- Depth perception improves

Psychological benefits of yoga

- Somatic and kinesthetic awareness increase
- Mood improves and subjective well-being increases
- Self-acceptance and self-actualization increase
- Social adjustment increases
- Anxiety and depression decrease
- Hostility decreases
- Concentration improves
- Memory improves
- Attention improves
- Learning ability improves
- Social skills increases
- Attention span improves

Biochemical Benefits of Yoga

- Glucose decreases
- Sodium decreases
- Total cholesterol decreases Triglycerides decrease
- HDL cholesterol increases
- LDL cholesterol decreases
- VLDL cholesterol decreases
- Cholinesterase increases
- Catecholamines decrease
- ATPase increases
- Hematocrit increases
- Hemoglobin increases
- Lymphocyte count increases
- Total white blood cell count decreases
- Thyroxin increases
- Vitamin C increases
- Total serum protein increases

Benefits of Yoga compared to other forms of exercise

Yoga	Exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parasympathetic Nervous System dominates • Subcortical regions of brain dominate • Slow dynamic and static movements • Normalization of muscle tone • Low risk of injuring muscles and ligaments • Low caloric consumption • Effort is minimized, relaxed • Energizing (breathing is natural or controlled) • Balanced activity of opposing muscle groups • Non-competitive, process-oriented • Awareness is internal (focus is on breath and the infinite) • Limitless possibilities for growth in self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sympathetic Nervous System dominates • Cortical regions of brain dominate • Rapid forceful movements • Increased muscle tension • Higher risk of injury • Moderate to high caloric consumption • Effort is maximized • Fatigue (breathing is taxed) • Imbalance activity of opposing groups • Competitive, goal-oriented • Awareness is external (focus is on reaching the toes, reaching the finish line, etc) • Boredom factor

CHAIR YOGA

Chair Yoga offers the same benefits as Floor Yoga. The difference being that not all poses regular Yoga can be practiced while sitting in a chair so some very minor level of benefit may be lost from one pose but can be found in another.

Chair Yoga is particularly beneficial (and in fact makes Yoga possible at all in many cases) for people who are elderly, physically disabled, obese or confined to small spaces for any length of time (eg office workers or travellers).

Many elderly people, particularly those living in aged care facilities, have little reason to lift their arms above their head. The gentle practice of Chair Yoga gives them an opportunity to awaken many parts of their body that may have been neglected for years and gets their blood flowing.

People with weight issues like obesity are often unable to manage floor postures, so Chair Yoga can be a great place for them to start moving *and connecting with* their bodies.

People who work in offices and sit at a desk all day can practice Chair Yoga postures to get their blood flowing and recharge their energy without needing to find the space and privacy they would need to practice regular Yoga.

People who are chair bound or otherwise physically disabled can begin to experience the wonderful benefits of Yoga by remaining seated and only using the parts of their body that are moveable. This helps to strengthen those active body parts, improves general health and provides a great sense of achievement and body connection.

Chair Yoga is also a wonderful and very gentle addition to a recovery program for anyone who is recuperating from an accident or convalescing from illness.

TEACHING CHAIR YOGA

Each session of this Chair Yoga and meditation class runs for approximately one hour and has the same structure for each session.

- Introductions (10 minutes)
- Chair Yoga exercises (30 minutes)
- Choose a mixture of postures but do not attempt to work through all of them in the same session.
 - Breathing and stretching exercises (5 minutes)
 - Feet and leg exercises (5 minutes)
 - Hip and lower back exercises (5 minutes)
 - Shoulder, arms, chest and hand exercises (5 minutes)
 - Neck exercises (4 minutes)
 - Face exercises (3 minutes)
 - Eye exercises (3 minutes)
- Guided relaxation exercise (10 minutes)
- Meditation (10 minutes)
- Wind down, (Sitting quietly, breathing consciously, group sharing of experience, social cuppa (teacher to determine time)

Chair Yoga exercises, guided relaxation and meditation are the same every week but mixed from week to week to provide variety and so participants become very familiar with all of the exercises and can practice them whenever they wish.

Affirmations used in the meditation should be changed each week/session, so a new affirmation is introduced and the student will then use this new affirmation while practicing at home throughout that week.

Print out the affirmations at the end of this e-book and hand them out to your students at the end of each class so they can remember that week's affirmation.

The wind down time, breathing, sharing and a social cuppa at the end of the session is an important aspect of the seniors class as many older people consider the opportunity to socialise to be just as important to their enjoyment of the class as the actual class content.

It is also a good opportunity for you as the teacher to get to know your students and answer any questions they may have.

MAKING YOUR CHAIR YOGA ENVIRONMENT COMPLETELY SAFE

The Natural Healer's credo is: *Always do no harm! or And harm ye none.*

The teacher is responsible for knowing the medical conditions of all participants; what their limitations are and what movements are to be avoided. Watch for clues like over-exertion.

If a participant is grimacing, they may be trying too hard or using wrong posture and injuring themselves. Some grunting and groaning is normal at first, but be sure that people do not exceed their physical, mental, or emotional limits.

Make sure your students understand that they need to extend and 'rest' into the posture... allowing the body to 'gently fall' into a posture. Never strain and struggle into it. **Never, ever manually adjust anyone's body.**

Golden rule: In Chair Yoga, if it hurts don't do it!

Ensure the chairs being used by your students are stable, strong and in good repair. Make sure the chairs are firm on the floor not rickety, splintered or slippery. Chairs used for Chair Yoga must be straight backed and not too high for the participants to rest their feet comfortably on the floor.

Make sure each participant has enough room to move without making contact with other students or each other's chairs. They should be able to extend their arms out completely to the sides and all the way out in front of them.

Try to use a room that is quiet and close the door. Natural light is best but lighting which can be dimmed or decreased is also acceptable. You might like to ask your students if they prefer music or silence. If you use music, choose music which is peaceful and relaxing. Make sure any music you play is loud enough to hear but does not drown out your voice. Many older participants may be hard at hearing so double check that everyone can hear your voice before you start.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR TEACHERS

1. Always talk about the benefits of Chair Yoga Postures while your students are practicing them.
2. Always speak clearly and with volume but at the same time, in a calm and soothing voice.
3. Take time and allow your students to relax into each pose for a few moments before moving on to the next pose.
4. Watch your students to ensure no one is over extending themselves, using poor posture or experiencing any pain.
5. Students should be wearing comfortable clothing that is loose and allows them to move freely.
6. While Chair Yoga is best practiced in bare feet, some older students or those with disabilities may wish to keep shoes on. Suggest removing shoes but always make it optional.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR YOUR STUDENTS

(make sure your students know and understand these guidelines and remind them often)

1. Before beginning take a long deep breath and exhale with a sigh "Ahhhhh".
2. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after practicing Chair Yoga.
3. While practicing Chair Yoga, keep both feet planted on the floor at all times (unless the pose requires something different.)
4. Posture is very important. Ensure basic good posture is used with all poses.
5. The correct resting posture for Chair Yoga is to be sitting upright in a straight backed chair with feet flat on the floor, hands resting on knees with shoulders, knees and feet in line.
6. Move slowly and gently. NEVER use aggressive, forceful or sharp movements.
7. A gentle or slight sensation of stretching in the muscles is sometimes to be expected but no Yoga posture should ever be painful.
8. Be aware of your own body and avoid postures that are painful or don't feel right for you.
9. Always sit quietly for a little while when you have finished practicing Chair Yoga, to let your body relax.

CHAIR YOGA EXERCISES

You can view these on Youtube www.youtube.com/watch?v=89TE-HwISUg

- Breathing and stretching exercises (5 minutes)
- Feet and leg exercises (5 minutes)
- Hip and lower back exercises (5 minutes) |
- Shoulder, arms, chest and hand exercises (5 minutes)
- Neck exercises (4 minutes)
- Face exercises (3 minutes)
- Eye exercises (3 minutes)



BREATHING AND STRETCHING

Notes and benefits

The deep breathing exercises should not cause exertion or hyperventilation instead they should bring about relaxation and comfort. If it does not feel relaxing, it is not being done correctly. It should also be as soundless as possible.

Having said this, as the teacher, you may want to exhale loudly with a sigh “AHHHHH” between exercises and encourage your students to do the same. This reminds your students to breathe and relax.

It also punctuates the exercises, allowing a definite start and ending to each exercise which helps students better remember each exercise.

- Relaxing, cantering, calming, energizing
- Increases oxygenation throughout the body and strengthens the respiratory system
- Lowers blood pressure, detoxifies, and cleanses the body
- Triggers the "relaxation response"

Relaxed pose: *The relaxed pose is the position to start all Chair Yoga exercises from and the position to return to at the end of each exercise.*

Sitting in a relaxed position with good posture... feet flat on the ground, legs together but relaxed, back and neck straight, hands resting on the lap, take a slow deep breath. (You may wish to use the loud ‘AHHHH’ breath here to punctuate and separate all exercises).

Centered breathing: Sitting in a relaxed position with good posture... feet flat on the ground, legs together but relaxed, back and neck straight, hands resting on the lap, take a slow deep breath. As you inhale, expand the belly, the chest, and the collarbone area.

Then as you slowly exhale, relax the collarbone area down, relax the chest down, and draw the belly slightly inward towards the spine. Inhale slowly, exhale deeply. (Repeat approx 10 times).

Butterfly breathing: Move the hands up into a praying position at the chest. Continue to sit in a straight upright position with the feet flat on the floor. As you inhale move your hands down towards your lap and let them separate as you move your arms out to your sides to make a big circle with your hands meeting again high above your head but this time with the backs of your hands touching each other.

You should now be sitting with feet flat on the floor, legs together but relaxed, back and neck straight, arms fully extended above you in a point with fingers pointed skyward. Hold this for a second and then gently begin to exhale.

As you exhale slowly bring your arms back down in a circular movement and take them back to the prayer position. Hold this for a second and then repeat. (Repeat approximately 10 times)

Breathing for relaxation: Place your right hand over your heart and your left hand over your stomach. Close your eyes take a long, deep breath inward and focus your mind on the rhythm of your breathing...slowly exhale and remain focused on the air as it enters and leaves your body. Take another deep breath counting to three, four or five as you inhale and exhale for the same count. (Creating a consistent breathing rhythm, so that you are breathing in for exactly the same amount of time that you are breathing out.) Focus on your heart lifting and your ribcage expanding as you inhale. Notice your chest drop and your ribcage contract as you exhale. (Repeat approximately 10 times)

Full body stretch: Begin in the relaxed pose. Sit up as straight as possible as if a thread is running through you from the base of your spine and out the top of your head. Feel as if the thread is being gently pulled so that your entire body from your seat up stretches upward.

Breathe in as you extend allow the shoulders to fall backward not upward and let your chest expand fully. Now slowly lift your right leg so that it is extended straight out in front of you. Point your toes and rotate your foot from your ankle in a clockwise circle. Then rotate your foot the other way in a full circle. Remember to keep breathing in a calm and regular rhythm.



Slowly put your right leg back down and repeat the exercise with your left leg. Now raise your right arm straight out to your side and stretch it slowly above your head. Wiggle your fingers (twinkle twinkle little star) then slowly bring your arm back down to your side and return your hand to your lap. Repeat with the left arm. Now repeat with both arms at the same time.

Now sitting in the relaxed pose gently tilt your head down rest your chin on your chest. Now lift the head back up to look straight ahead. Now slowly tilt your head upwards to look at the roof.

Then return to the normal position, looking straight ahead. Turn your head slowly to the right now as if to look over your right shoulder and then turn slowly all the way round to look over your left shoulder. Look straight ahead again.

Now lift your shoulders in a hunch, hold for a second and slowly put your shoulders back into correct posture (do not drop them).

TEACHERS NOTE: Always ensure your students use slow, gentle movements so as not to jar or strain muscles or joint. Also watch to make sure your students are all using correct posture and breathing. People often hold their breath while learning new movements and so it is important to continually remind your students to breathe.

FEET AND LEGS

Notes and benefits:

- Improves circulation
- Reduces leg cramping
- Helps combat water retention
- Creates stability
- Improves balance



Ankle flex: Sit on the edge of your seat. Start with both feet planted firmly on the floor. Extend your right leg and rest your foot on the centre back of your heel. Firm your upper right thigh and straighten your right leg to the floor.

Inhale deeply as you slowly point your toes, exhale slowly as you flex your foot. Be sure to articulate your toes and the spaces between them as you breathe. Repeat five times and then go to the left foot.

Ankle circles: Start with both feet planted in to the floor. Extend your right leg and flex your ankle, heel slightly elevated. Pointing your toe, slowly rotate your foot around your ankle clockwise five times. Then rotate your foot slowly around your ankle counter clockwise five times, the slower the better. Switch sides.

HIPS AND LOWER BACK

Notes and benefits

The hips and lower back often store an enormous amount of tension. Our bodies were not designed for sedentary living, they were intended to be used; to walk, bend, run, hop, laugh, wiggle and sigh with relief.

Remember the old saying “move it or lose it” and try to take little breaks from sitting whenever you can, short walks around the house, the garden or the neighbourhood are great ways to stay active as well as practicing Yoga whenever you can.

- Releases tension in your lower body
- Calms your nervous system
- Re-energizes and refreshes you

Spinal flex: To begin sit in the centre of your chair placing your palms face down on your thighs and anchor your feet to the floor. Exhale slowly as you press your belly towards the back of your chair and lower your chin to your chest, making your back very round.

Inhale slowly lifting your chest towards the ceiling rolling the pelvis forward. Continue moving between these two poses smoothing out your movement as well as your breath. You will begin to notice your shoulder blades spreading away from the spine on your exhale and wrapping towards your spine on your inhale.

Hip opener: Gently relax the soles of your feet into the floor. Soften your buttocks and cross your right ankle over your left knee. Place your right hand on your right thigh and your left hand near your right ankle. Sit very tall and relax your shoulders sliding your shoulder blades down your back. Gently press your right thigh towards the floor.

Begin to relax all your face muscles, even the spaces under your cheeks. Relax and breathe naturally through your nose. If this is comfortable for you, gently fold forward relaxing your chest to your calf. (Don't get attached to your chest touching your calf. Just breathe long and deeply and let yourself rest in the loving hands of gravity).

Remember when exploring your hips to always relax your jaw. Take five to ten long deep breaths and then do the left side.

Rag doll: Rest feet on the floor. Bow your chin to your chest allowing your arms to dangle. Slowly curl down one vertebra at a time eventually resting your chest towards your thighs. Drop your head allowing the blood to flush out your brain. Take five to ten long deep breaths.

Twist: Begin with both knees bent, soles of the feet anchored in to the floor. Sit squarely on both sitz bones and sit tall floating the crown of your head to the sky. Place your left hand on your right knee and your right hand on the back of your seat. Inhale deeply lifting your chest, sliding your shoulder blades down your back.

Exhale completely pressing your navel to your spine keeping your hips frontally aligned, gently twist from your waist. With each complete exhale really press your belly backwards towards your spine.

In your mind's eye spin your energy up around your spine to your third eye. On your fifth long exhale slowly guide yourself back to neutral spine, inhale slowly beginning your left side.

Droopy mountain/tall mountain: Dip the spine as if you were falling asleep forward, then very slowly sit back up straight. Repeat a few times.

Sit with the spine upright and hands relaxing on your lap. Stretch upward with your spine... Create a very tall mountain... still taller, still taller.

Be wide awake in a proud posture. You are awake, alert, present, and relaxed.

SHOULDERS, ARMS, CHEST AND HANDS

Notes and benefits

This area of the body is known as the Heart Centre. The heart is reliable, usually consistent and for the most part, predictable. Having an open heart centre promotes good circulation, proper oxygenation and radiates a sense of wellbeing that will be reflected on your face and in your mood. The Heart Centre can be closed down from poor posture, too many hours sitting still and lack of sleep.



Shallow breathing is a habit most people develop and the result is not enough oxygen getting in, to detoxify the body.

Hands and shoulders are common places to hold stress as is the chest.

- Makes breathing easier
- Oxygenates the body
- Strengthens muscles
- Releases stress and tension
- Strengthens self confidence
- Creates internal harmony
- Improves flexibility

Chest expansion: Sit tall and anchor your feet to the floor. Interlace your hands behind your back and reach the knuckles of your fingers back and towards the floor. Move in a manner that feels natural and good. Keeping your head in neutral spine, inhale deeply and lift your chest away from your hips and exhale slowly sliding the shoulder blades down your back. Take five long deep breaths envisioning your heart shining.

Elbow lifts: Sitting tall, take long and deep breaths. Place your right hand on your right shoulder and your left hand on your left shoulder. Slowly inhale and gently rotate your elbows forward and up. Slowly exhale and lower your elbows back and down drawing full circles leading with your elbows. Do this slowly at least five times and then change directions.

Back expansion: Sit tall and anchor your feet deeply to the floor. Interlace your hands and press the heels of your hands away from the centre of your chest. Drop your mind to your heart, chin to chest as you pull your belly in to round your back. Reach forward through your shoulders taking five long deep breaths.

Shoulder blade squeeze: Sitting tall, bend your elbows so that your forearms are vertical to the floor. The palms of your hands are facing the same direction as your heart. Exhale completely as you squeeze your elbows down and towards each other behind your back. Feel your shoulder blades wrapping around your spine with each exhale. Do this five times.

Heart warmer: Sitting very tall, press your palms together in prayer pose, gently pressing in to your chest. Be sure that your wrists are in line with your elbows and your fingers and thumbs are facing up towards the ceiling. Firmly press them together as you lift the chest sliding your shoulder blades down. Take five long deep breaths.

Rubber maestro: Extend your arms forward and press your palms away from you, with your hands parallel to your heart. Begin pretending to dramatically play the piano, shaking the hands inviting your wrist to become like rubber. Shake off any old holding patterns or unnecessary gripping. Remember the hands are extensions of your heart.

Shoulder rolls: Sitting up straight, inhale and draw your shoulders up toward your ears. Squeeze them tightly. Press your shoulder blades toward each other, lifting your heart, feeling the stretch across your chest and shoulders. Exhale and relax as you release your shoulder blades, sliding them on your back. Repeat five times or more. Remember to breathe deeply!

Benefits: Relaxes shoulder and neck tension, increases circulation to the head, neck and shoulders.

NOTE: Relieves headaches and releases upper back tightness.

Arms overhead: Inhale deeply as you raise your arms out to your sides and overhead, palms facing upward. Interlace your fingers and turn your palms to face the ceiling. Straighten your elbows as much as you comfortably can. Exhale as you press through the heels of your hands.

Inhale as you press through your fingers and drop your shoulders down away from your ears. Breathe deeply 3 to 5 times. Move your body and your breath together.

Feel your shoulder blades push gently against your back as you exhale. Expand and stretch as you inhale, soften and relax as you exhale. To release the pose, press out through the heels of your hands, fingers spread wide apart, and continue to press outward as you slowly lower your arms on the exhale.

Stretches, relaxes and brings increased circulation to arms, wrists, hands, shoulders, back and chest.

Side stretch: Raise your right arm overhead, sit up straight and lengthen through your arm, all the way to your fingertips. Inhale deeply. Exhale as you arch to the left.

As you stretch, keep your shoulder blades flat on your back and lift the right side of your ribcage with each inhalation. Keep your back flat and your arm extended. Take three to five deep breaths, and then come back to centre as you inhale.

Exhaling, consciously and slowly lower your arm. Raise your left arm overhead and repeat the stretch to the right. Benefits: Stretches the chest and shoulders, the arms, ribcage and spine.

Massages organs, stimulates the nervous system, and hydrates spinal discs.

Spinal twists: Sit up straight toward the edge of your seat. Cross your right leg over your left. Place your left hand on the inside of your left knee. Inhale deeply as you raise your back arm overhead and twist to the right; exhale as you bring your right elbow or shoulder around toward the back of your chair. Take 3 to 5 full breaths.

Lift through the crown of your head as you inhale and twist a little deeper as you exhale. Keep lengthening your spine. To unwind the twist, inhale as you raise your back arm overhead and come back to center on the exhalation. Repeat for 3 to 5 breaths on the other side.

Benefits: Massages organs of digestion and elimination, relieving constipation and indigestion, releases back strain and tension, and relaxes the nervous system. Creates flexibility in the spine.

Riding the camel through the desert: Begin in the neutral seated position. Then slump the spine forward, chin to chest, as in the droopy mountain position. Let the spine, including the head, curl forward.

Then bring the spine into the opposite position: lift the chin and chest up toward the ceiling and arch the back. Pull the shoulders gently back.

Repeat, then return to the neutral position and rest.

Half moon: Inhale, then exhale and deeply relax. Then slowly raise the right arm out to the side then above the head. Place the left arm outside the chair and reach towards the ground. Lean the body over to the left, maintaining stability at your centre.

Keep the buttocks connected to the chair and the torso facing forward. Try and stretch the whole right side of the body. Repeat on the other side.

Place the right arm outside the chair and reach towards the ground. Lean the body over to the right, maintaining stability at your centre. Keep the buttocks connected to the chair. Repeat, then return to neutral.

Take a deep breath and relax. Say to yourself, *I am calm, I am relaxed*.

As you inhale say *I am calm*, as you exhale say *I am relaxed*. Repeat.

Forward bend: Become calm and centered. Take a deep breath. As in the first part of Riding the Camel, fold the body forward over the legs, but do it very slowly. See if you can feel each one of the vertebra moving. Try to completely relax the body forward. Let it hang forward.

Reach towards your toes, then also let the arms hang limp. Pause in this position. The feet remain connected to the ground so that you have support under you and will not fall out of the chair. Keep a lot of weight on the buttocks to remain balanced.

If you feel dizzy, come slowly out of the position. Whatever position you are in, rest deeply. Pause for a bit. Rest even your mind.

Then, slowly roll up the spine again trying to feel each vertebra as it lifts you back up. Feel the vertebrae stacking one on top of the other. Pause here and rest.

Back bend: Inhale, then exhale and stretch the arms out to the sides. Extend through the outstretched fingers. Try and straighten the arms. Have a lot of energy in the arms. Then lean slightly back against the chair, lift the chest. Remain easeful and comfortable. Do not strain. Take a few deep breaths and enjoy. Then return to the neutral seated position and pause.

Triangle: Now, reach the right arm down to the right shin or any part of the leg. Inhale, exhale and relax. Keep the right arm reaching to the right leg as you lift the left arm up to the ceiling, palm facing to the left. Try and look up past the outstretched left fingers. Reach through the fingers of the left hand. Then fold the spine into the forward bend and rest. Dangle the arms.

Slowly roll the spine up, one vertebra at a time. Reach the left arm down to the left shin or any part of the leg. Try not to strain. Inhale, exhale and relax. Keep the left arm reaching to the left leg as you lift the right arm up to the ceiling, palm facing to the right. Try and look up past the outstretched right fingers. Reach through the fingers of the right hand. Then fold the spine into the forward bend and rest. Dangle the arms.

Slowly roll the spine up, one vertebra at a time.

Sun Salutation: A great adaptation of a traditional asana

This is a series of eight positions that flow together into one beautiful dance. Remember to move slowly and mindfully. If something feels uncomfortable, change the position. Begin with the palms together in the prayer position.

Close the eyes and take a deep breath. Exhale and stretch the arms down along the side of the chair, then inhale and lift the arms out to the sides and up above the head.

With awareness, exhale and lower the arms back down along the sides of the body resting the palms on the thighs. Inhale, then exhale and bend forward reaching towards the toes. Let the spine curl. Lift the spine one vertebra at a time, extend the arms out to the sides inhaling with fingers fully extended. Lift the chest and look slightly up. Exhale and mindfully place the palms into prayer position. Observe yourself breathing. Repeat a few more times. Enjoy.

THE NECK

Notes and benefits

Working at the computer, sitting for too long in one position or driving long distances can cause tension in the neck and shoulders. Worry, lack of sleep and improper diet can make it even worse.

Practice becoming aware of where your body holds tension so that you can learn ways of releasing stress and tension.

- Relieves tension in the neck
- Improves flexibility



Turkey neck: Sit squarely grounding both feet deeply in to the floor. Lengthen the sides of your torso using your back muscles. Lift your chest and slide your shoulder blades down your back. Rest the backs of your hands on your thighs, palms turned up and align your elbows to your shoulders.

Inhale deeply gently tucking your chin without allowing your head to bend forward, creating two or three double chins like turkey's withers. Exhale slowly and float your head up off your shoulders. Repeat five times remembering to breathe long and deeply. Finish by relaxing back in to your chair.

Head rolls: Sitting squarely and tall, breathing long and deeply. Maintaining your turkey stretch inhale slowly and rotate your head towards the right. Exhale completely slowly rotating your head back to centre.

Inhale deeply slowly rotating your head towards the left, exhale completely slowly rotating your head back to centre. Continue floating your head away from your shoulders and do this three more times on each side; the slower the better.

Lateral neck: Sitting tall, breathing long and deeply, gently lower your right ear toward your right shoulder. Try to keep your shoulders square without slouching. If you're an over achiever, remember the ear never touches the shoulder.

If that's comfortable, float the right palm of your hand and rest it on the crown of your head allowing your left arm just to hang and dangle. Take five long deep breaths, and with each exhale relax your left shoulder more. When you are finished, do the left side too.

Sitting tall, breathing deeply, gently lower your right ear toward your right shoulder. Drop your left shoulder and slowly rotate your nose towards your right armpit. Float your right arm up resting your hand on the crown of your head. Five long deep breaths. Slowly return your head to neutral and do the left side.

Sitting tall, breathing deeply, gently bow your chin to your chest. Slowly rotate your left ear to your left shoulder and inhale, slowly rotate your right ear to your right shoulder and exhale. Move in a rhythm that feels good; the slower the better.

FACE EXERCISES

Notes and benefits

- Releases tension
- Improves muscle tone
- Decreases wrinkles!



Jaw stretch: Stretch the jaw wide open as you breathe in deeply. Hold for a second or two. Slowly close the jaw as you exhale. Do not force your teeth together. Just rest your mouth gently while it is shut. Pause for a second or two repeat. (Repeat 10 times)

Lion: Sit slightly forward on your chair and clasp your hands behind your back. Keep your back straight and your feet flat on the floor. Now extend your head forward, open your mouth wide, poke your tongue out as far as you can, while exhaling and making a loud 'AHHHHH" sound. Return to resting position. Repeat 6 times slowly.

EYE EXERCISES

Notes and benefits

Our eyes can often hold a lot of unnecessary tension and stress. Eyes get tired and dry from over use, pollutants and artificial lighting. Try to begin all eye exercises by simply softening your gaze. This teaches us to adjust the intensity with which we look at different objects.

For example, we do not use the same power in our hands to brush away a child tear as we would to squeeze a lemon. In the same way we should not look at a computer screen or television in the same way we would gaze upon a newborn baby or a beautiful flower.

When you are reading or watching television remember to give your eyes a break for a moment and practice some of these exercises.

Before practicing eye exercise always remove eyeglasses and place them in a safe place.

- Soothes and lubricates tired eyes
- Strengthens your vision and insight
- Enhances focus and attention
- In some cases, can improve eye sight



Eyes of compassion: Close the eyes. Relax the eyes in their sockets. Then, slowly open the eyes. Gaze directly forward, keep the eye muscles relaxed. Moving the eyes very slowly, look up to the ceiling keeping the head still. Hold this gaze for a few seconds.

Now look straight forward again and attempt to soften your gaze by relaxing the eyes in their sockets. Look back at the ceiling without moving your head and repeat as before.

(Repeat 10 times)

Eye scrunch: Sitting in the relaxed pose, take a slow deep breath now close your eyes very tightly. Squeeze them shut and hold for a second or two and then open your eyes very slowly as if in slow motion. Exhale. (Repeat 10 times)

Palm rub and self-massage: Bring your palms together and rub them briskly, creating heat between them. Or, using one hand, rub the palm of the hand on the thigh to generate heat.

Place the warm palms over the closed eyes and soak in the darkness. Melt into the warmth and comfort. Then, use your fingertips to press between the eyebrows. Press the fingertips over top the eyelids then out to the temples. Do this again.

Make circular movements with the fingertips around the temples. Drag the fingertips down the side of the face, over top the jaw. Press the fingertips into the jaw muscles next to and below the ear. Then massage the sides and back of the neck. Take a deep breath and relax.

Say to yourself, *I am calm, I am relaxed.*

As you inhale say *I am calm*, as you exhale say *I am relaxed.* (Repeat twice or three times)

GUIDED RELAXATION

Notes: Ask your students to sit in a comfortable position. They can lean against the back of the chair or sit upright. Some students may wish to sit cross legged on the floor for the guided relaxation and Meditation part of the class, if they are physically able. The only real 'rule' is that the spine should always be kept straight.

Remember for many senior and disabled people, getting down on the floor is easy, it is getting up again that is the trick! You might encourage those students who wish to use the floor for this section of your class to bring a Yoga mat, rug and/or pillow. Use a moderately strong voice that will keep everyone awake and alert. Speak clearly and slowly.

Script

To begin, get yourself into a comfortable position. It is important to make sure your spine is straight... close your eyes and slowly exhale... .now slowly inhale... .and exhale... and inhale... allow your attention to move to your hands... clench your fists... squeeze your fists as tightly as possible.

Focus on the feelings of tension in your fingers, in your hands and in your forearms.... now relax your hands... wiggle your fingers and let your hands completely relax.... allow the muscles in your forearms to relax...just focus on the muscles in your hands and in your arms being completely relaxed.

Now, raise your eyebrows and feel the muscles in your forehead become tight and tense. Now try to let go approximately half of that tension from your forehead, while keeping the remaining tension at a constant, steady level.

Now, let half of *that* remaining tension go and hold the remaining tension steady; and now release half of that tension. *Try to maintain just a tiny level of tension...* Now allow your forehead to completely relax.

Let all the tension go and feel your forehead smooth out and relax... just enjoy the good feeling as your forehead being completely relaxed (this helps students begin to recognize the physical sensation of tension and also of relaxed muscles.)

Squeeze your eyes shut very tightly, now and feel the muscles tense that circle your eyes. Then relax...Let all the tensions leave. Allow your eyelids to rest gently while your eyes remain closed.

Now, pucker your lips... squeeze your mouth shut very tightly and feel the tension in the circular muscles around your mouth... Now relax your lips and let them rest gently against your teeth.

Clench your teeth now. Let your lips remain relaxed while clenching your teeth. Feel the muscles tighten in the corners of your jaw and on up into your temples....Now, relax your jaw... gently wiggle your jaw from side to side to release the tension... let your jaw hang slack... let all the tension go out of it...focus on how relaxed the muscles in your face are feeling... completely relaxed.

Now tense the muscles in your neck that move your head back. While keeping those muscles tight, try to move your head forward so that you're tensing one set of muscles against another... *move your head slowly to the right and to the left*. Feel how tight the muscles in your neck are feeling and now, let those muscles relax all at once. Let your neck relax completely.

Move the points of your shoulders forward and together as if you were trying to touch your shoulders together in front of you... feel the tension across your upper back... and now push your shoulders back as if you were trying to touch the points of your shoulder blades together behind you. And now relax.... Just feel the relaxation spread across your shoulders and along upper back.

Tighten the muscles in your buttocks... squeeze them in as tightly as you can... and now let them completely relax ...tense your knees and your thigh muscles now.... Hold these muscles tight and notice the feelings of tension. Now relax... just let those muscles lengthen and smooth out. Feel the muscles gradually lengthen as they relax more and more.

Now, point your toes downward so that they are in direct line with your legs. Feel the muscles that are tensed in your calves. And now relax... Pull your toes up now as if to touch your shins. Feel the muscles tighten in your shins. Relax those muscles in your calves now...

Now curl your toes into a to a tight ball, hold them tight and feel the tension... now give your toes a gentle wiggle and just let them go... allow your toes to completely relax... .allow your awareness to scan slowly through your body starting at your toes... noticing how relaxed every muscle in your body feels... scan up your legs and your back... slowly to your shoulders...if you find a tight muscle just gently let it go so that it is completely relaxed... scan the muscles in your head and face and back down to your chest, along your arms and into your hands... just gently scanning each muscle, releasing ay tension and quietly observing how relaxed your body feels.

Turn your attention to your breathing now, just notice how slowly the air is entering your body filling your lungs and then gently leaving your body Don't try to control your breathing just gently observe it....

As you exhale, let everything go and allow the weight of your chest to expel the air from your lungs...as you inhale allow your body to be nurtured with pure, calm, positive energy...as you exhale let go of ay tension or worries you may be holding on to

Just let them go and breath them away... .breath in peace... calm and positivity .as you exhale think to yourself 'I release all tension and worry' as you inhale think to yourself '*I breath in calm, positive energy*'.

Imagine yourself gently floating now... slowly and safely floating above the tree tops on a gentle breeze ...completely relaxed. As I count back from 10 imagine yourself floating downward like a feather toward the grass in a beautiful green field until you land gently on the ground when I reach one... .feel yourself floating... completely relaxed and totally free...

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.....imagine yourself laying comfortably in the soft, sweet smelling grass in a beautiful field... the sun is very gently bathing you in warm, healing light... notice how comfortable and relaxed you are feeling... notice how slow and relaxed your heart beat feels... notice how slow and relaxed your breathing is... .you are completely relaxed.

(Pause for a moment and then go on to the meditation).

MEDITATION

Notes: This meditation focuses on the natural breath. It is a Mindfulness Zen Meditation technique which means that the focus is on the present and exactly what is happening in the present moment. It helps to train the mind to be in the 'now'.

Everything that happens in that moment is part of the meditation... every sound, smell and sensation. Yet, the awareness is drawn again and again back to the natural breathing. Thoughts associated with the moment (my nose is itchy, I can smell roses, I hear a bird) are all welcome as part of the meditation. Thoughts of the past and future (worries, memories and plans) are to be replaced with a focus on the breath.

Script: *(Your students should already be in a state of relaxation with eyes closed)*

Focus on your breath. Feel the air as it slowly enters and leaves your body. Allow your mind to be completely calm with no thought of the past or the future. Focus only on the now. Think only of the way your body feels right now.... Observe the sounds you can hear... .Observe the smells and the sensations you are experiencing right now...

In your mind, say to yourself: *This is now, I am now...*

Say to yourself. *I am thinking.* Notice what you are thinking. Then, bring your awareness back to your natural breath. Repeat this process for a short time. Allow your mind to rest. Try not to resist anything that comes into your mind.

Let everything be part of this meditation. If you start to think about the past or the future, just gently bring your awareness back to your breathing...to the air gently entering and leaving your body.

(Allow your students to rest for a moment and then go on with the guided imagery).

Guided imagery script:

(Your students should already be in a state of relaxation with eyes closed)

Visualize, imagine or try to picture a winding path stretching out in front of you in a beautiful lush forest. Imagine yourself walking happily along the pathway into the forest. Try to notice the trees and plants beside the path. Try to imagine the smells and the sounds of the forest.

Try to feel the gentle breeze on your face as you walk through this beautiful natural place. You know that you are completely safe here in this beautiful forest. There is nothing here that can harm you and nothing or no one else can be here with you without your permission.

Just picture the beauty of nature unfolding before you as wonder along the pathway. Notice what birds and animals you can see...notice the colours ... notice the textures... notice the bird song and the fresh sweet air...

Up ahead you can see a clearing with a soft green lawn scattered with wildflowers. In the middle of the clearing is a big, soft comfortable chair. Imagine yourself walking over to the chair and sitting down in it... from your comfortable position in the chair, gaze around at the beautiful wildflowers and the colourful butterflies that surround you and take in the serenity and power of the thick forest beyond....

As you sit in your chair repeat these words in your mind to yourself... *(PUT THE AFFIRMATION FOR THIS WEEK IN HERE... Repeat the affirmation six times, allowing sufficient time after for your students to repeat the words to themselves)*

Now just sit for a while and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you... *(give your students a few minutes, but begin speaking again if you notice any restless movement.) ...*

Now, as you sit comfortably in your forest chair, turn your attention to your breathing, just notice how slowly the air is entering your body filling your lungs and then gently leaving your body Don't try to control your breathing just gently observe it....

As you exhale imagine all your worries of daily life leaving your body with the air and being swept off into the clear blue sky above you. As you inhale imagine good health, peace and happiness entering your body with the air and filling every part of your being.... *(let your students breath for a few minutes) ...*

It is time to leave the forest for now but remember now that you have found this beautiful, relaxing place you can return to it any time you wish, simply by closing your eyes and walking along the pathway...

Imagine yourself getting up from the chair now and beginning to walk back along the forest path. Take in the beauty and peacefulness and know this beautiful place is always safe for you and it is always there, waiting for you to return...as you move along the path start to become aware of the sounds beyond the forest, become aware of my voice, become aware of your breathing and how slow and relaxed it is.

Become aware of your body. Become aware of the room around you...

Now slowly wiggle your fingers and when you are completely ready slowly open your eyes.

(Give your students a few moments to relax and regain their composure before going on. You may wish to ask them to share their experience with the class if they want to).

AFFIRMATIONS (Student handouts)

Page 27 contains a template of 10 Affirmations.

Print the page and cut the boxes out so that each affirmation is on a piece of paper or card alone.

You should print the page as many times as you require, ensuring all of your students receive an affirmation for every session. Example: 10 students = 10 pages, will last ten sessions.

You may wish to use coloured paper or card.

You may also like to encourage your students to decorate their affirmations and put them on their walls or on their fridge at home.

You may also like to create your own affirmations for your students.

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEETS (Student handouts)

Page 28 contains a template for your student information sheets. Print this sheet out, fill in the details about you and your classes and give one to each new student.

STUDENT BOOKING FORMS

Page 29 contains a template for your student booking form. Print this sheet out and have each new student fill it in and return it to you. Always keep all student information confidential and keep student records in a secure safe place.

Make sure you have a list of your students' names, contact details, emergency contact phone numbers and any important health information with you at every class in case of an emergency.

My body is healthy. My mind is pure. My spirit soars. All is well

I am at peace with the details of life. All is well. My mind is at peace

I am peaceful and loving. My life is filled with love and happiness. All is well.

I relax and let life flow through me with ease. All is well.

I am the power and authority in my life. All is well and I am free to be me.

I love and approve of myself. All is well and I am safe.

I am one with all of life. I am always safe and all is well.

I choose to handle all of my experiences with love, joy and ease.

My mind is clear and free. I leave the past behind and choose to move into the new with joy.

I declare love and peace within me and around me. All is well in my world.

CHAIR YOGA AND MEDITATION CLASS
STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

About Chair Yoga and meditation

This Chair Yoga and meditation class is suitable for people with all levels of experience in Yoga and meditation from beginners to advanced. Our meditation and Yoga styles are non-religious and suitable for people from all cultural backgrounds.

Chair Yoga is suitable for people with limited mobility, living in wheelchairs and for those who find conventional floor Yoga too difficult or have balance issues. Chair Yoga is gentle and offers most of the same benefits of other Yoga styles.

Some of the benefits you can experience from learning and regularly practicing Yoga include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower blood pressure • Better circulation • Better breathing • Improved muscle and joint flexibility • Improved physical strength • Better eye-hand coordination • Greater dexterity • Reaction time improves • Posture improves • Strength and resiliency increase • Physical endurance increases • Energy level increases • Weight normalizes • Sleep improves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunity increases • Pain decreases • Steadiness and balance improves • Depth perception improves • Mood improves • Self-acceptance and self-actualization increase • Social adjustment increases • Anxiety and depression decrease • Concentration improves • Memory improves • Attention improves • Learning ability improves • Social skills increases • Attention span improves
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About your teacher

Your teacher holds a Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Human Development, which includes the Certificate in Chair Yoga Instruction.

About your class

Class title	
Teacher's name	
Teacher's contact number	
Teacher's registration number	
Class times	
Class venue	
Venue address	
Venue number	

CHAIR YOGA AND MEDITATION CLASS
STUDENT BOOKING FORM

Your Full Name	
Preferred Name	
Your Address	
Date of birth (Optional)	
Telephone number	
Mobile number	
Emergency contact name	
Relationship (Friend, son, etc)	
Emergency contact phone	
Please list any medical conditions you have. This is so your teacher can ensure your Chair Yoga class is suitable for your physical condition.	

Please make sure your teacher is aware of all medical conditions.

Please check with your doctor before undertaking any new exercise routine.