

Five Yoga Exercises for Shelter at Home Time

Created by Debbie Stevens of 50+ Yoga and 108 Yoga Works

1) Breath of Joy

Stand with your feet parallel to each other, your arms at your sides, and knees relaxed. Inhale the arms forward, inhale the arms out to the sides away from shoulders, and inhale the arms overhead. Exhale as you slightly bend the knees and hinge at the hips and fold forward. Repeat 5 times.

This can be practiced in a chair or standing. It's a "sniffy" breath, so your inhales are 1-2-3 and followed by a long exhale which might even be with a Ha!

2) Bird on a Wire

Stand, without or with gently touching the wall or with a chair in front of you so fingertips can gently touch the chair. Let your right heel come in front of the left big toe. If this stance is challenging for you, simply stagger the feet so that the right is forward and aiming towards the front of the left foot. Feel both feet on the floor. Allow your thighs to squeeze toward each other. Feel your navel toward the back of your waist. Inhale your hands in front of you, clasp them together, bringing them over head as you exhale. Inhale and bend to your right and exhale back to where you began. Inhale as you bend the upper body to the left and exhale coming back up. Feel free to repeat twice to each side, or hold the pose on each side for 3 breaths. Change your feet so the left heel is toward the right big toe. Repeat what you practiced previously.

Another variation of this bird on a wire is for focus. In the same stance, if you have the right foot forward let the left arm come out in front of you, parallel to the floor, level with your shoulder. Make an easy fist with your thumb up. Relax your shoulders down your back. Allow your eyes and head to follow your thumb as your arm goes out to the side as far as you can comfortably go while you're still breathing and watching the thumb. When you've come as far as you can, slowly bring the arm back until it's in front of your shoulder again where you began. Change the feet stance and repeat on the 2nd side.

3) Cobra to Full Locust

Lie on your belly, dropping the pubic bone down. Stretch back through the legs, allow your hands to be almost under your shoulders, palms down, and your forehead to the mat. Inhale and gently lift up your chest, letting your head follow. Exhale to lower. Repeat 3 to 4 times and then inhale up into your Cobra pose and exhale and hold here for 5 breaths.

For a variation, inhale as you come up with your upper body and head, and right leg up and your left arm extended, hand in front of shoulder. Exhale and lower. Inhale the left leg up away from the floor, with the pubic bone still grounded, and your right arm up by your ear and exhale

and lower back to where you began. Repeat 4 times, alternating between the legs and the opposite arm. Then hold the pose.

For more work, feel free to lift up both legs, upper body and arms and hold for 5 breaths. Imagine you're Superman or Superwoman.

4) Seated Twist

This posture can be practiced sitting on a chair or seated on the floor. Let your legs stretch out in front of you, pressing down through your sitting bones, and pressing up through the crown of the head. Allow your shoulders to roll back and down your back. Inhale, feeling your spine lengthening, and exhale twisting to the right, your left hand coming to the outside of the right leg, with your right hand behind you on the floor, or off the floor for more work. Breathe in, and feel yourself taller, and as you breathe out, feel yourself coming into the pose a little more deeply. Allow your chin to come down across the chest over to the opposite shoulder away, from the way your body is twisting. Be here another two to three breaths. Breathe in and out and repeat on the other side.

If you're sitting on the floor, you can always bend one knee (pointing up to the ceiling), with the other leg stretched out, and then twist towards the bent knee. Final variation is to have the straight leg also bent, with the leg on the floor knee pointing to the foot of your mat.

5) Reclining Twist

Lying on your back, hug your knees into your chest. Breathe in and out. Feel your belly rising as you inhale, and sinking down as you exhale. Let your knees gently rock side to side. Let your arms come out in a "T" position, your hands on the floor out from your shoulders, with palms up or down. Let your knees come down towards the floor to the right, letting your head turn towards your left hand. Breathe in-and-out in your spinal twist. Be here for five breaths. Repeat with knees to other side.

For more challenge, stretch the legs straight out 90° away from your torso. If this pose hurts your back, allow both knees to be bent with feet on the floor and let them drop to one side and then the other.

Breathe. Take your time. Relax. Rest. Then when your body feel ready, roll over to one side using the hand you're not lying on, push away from the floor and come up to sitting.

Thank yourself for being good to your body/mind and using your breath.

Namaste ~] honor you.

Debbie Stevens, April 2020