



Yoga for Anxiety

Yoga for Anxiety Guide, a gentle and effective guide which you can follow anytime when you feel stressed or when you are feeling close to having an anxiety or panic attack.

This guide is designed to help you slow down physically and mentally to help give your mind a much needed rest, you can learn to control your breathing rhythm which helps to calm the mind and body while helping to slow down a rapid heart rate, helping you to deal with anxiety symptoms safely.

This guide contains a few simple yoga poses to help stretch out “hot spots” that we naturally tense up when stressed or fearful. Regular practice of these will help relax the body and mind, while keeping the body supple, increase lung capacity and supply fresh oxygen to the vital organs. The poses are not classified as exercise, they are slow, steady movements which increases our self-awareness and control over our own mind and body.

As with ALL exercise. It is important to check with your doctor before starting any new programme. (especially if you suffer from any Lung or heart issues). Listen to your body, start slowly and never push yourself past your body`s limit. Yoga should feel like a gentle, releasing stretch, stop if you feel dizzy or if a pose is painful to you, these are signs from your body that you are over-doing the pose or breathing techniques and you should gently back away and try again with ease.

I hope you enjoy this gentle guide and that it helps you with your anxiety.

Stay Strong Warrior,
Donna xxx

Anxiety is the most common reaction to stress which has built up inside of us and what is going on in our everyday lives.

Anxiety is unfortunately our natural response to a threat or danger, sparking our natural “fight or flight” in those situations’, however, sometimes the natural “fight or flight” continues in our bodies long after the “danger” has passed causing abnormal everyday functioning which can lead to an anxiety disorder. This can drastically affect our lives, how we see it, how we think and which can leave us feeling constantly drained both physically and mentally.

Anxiety, mild or severe has a lasting effect on our bodies. Anxiety is from the Latin verb: “angere” which means to press tightly or choke. Which can be the feeling we feel when dealing with a bad panic attack. The feeling of dread, scared, uncertainty and fear that washes over us in a tidal wave of a split second. Symptoms of anxiety include: Rapid heart rate and breathing, chest pressure and pain, shaking, muscle tension, nausea, headaches, hot/cold sweats, restlessness, insomnia and fatigue.

Stress can worsen feelings of an anxiety disorder, it can also be made worse by certain substances such as caffeine and alcohol. We can’t stop our natural anxiety that’s programmed into us but we can learn to control it- instead of it controlling us with regular practice of yoga and breathing techniques’ found in this guide.

Yoga can help relieve the symptoms of stress and anxiety by calming the mind which leads to calming the body. It helps us to focus on ourselves and on our breathing which helps aid relaxation allowing our body and mind to rest and relax.

The following poses can be held or have movement to help release nervous fidgeting and restlessness when fighting the anxiety demons. Carry out all the poses or just pick one to sit and be still. Carry out the pose(s) for a few minutes each. Focus on the breath more than the pose.

Once you feel your heart rate, rapid breathing and nervousness start to ease off, slow the pose(s) down and come to sit in Easy Pose (details below) for a while, breathing slow and deeply until you feel ready to go about your day, or drift off to a restful nap or sleep.



CAT/COW

Sometimes when we are in a state of panic, we can't sit still, we find ourselves pacing or foot tapping to relieve nervous energy which can leave us more exhausted. This pose is moving with your breath, working the spine while helping to release the nervous energy. Inhale as you look up and arch your back, exhale as you round the back and drop your chin. You may find to begin with you are going at quite a fast pace as your heart rate may be raised and your breathing shallow. Go with it, after a few minutes, you'll begin to be able to slow the breath down which will slow the movement and you feel less jumpy and fidgety.



EASY POSE

Stop, sit and breathe. Come to sit either crossed legged or Easy Pose taking one foot in front of the other. Close your eyes and take 5 long slow deep breaths. Inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth. If your mind is all over the place, add a mantra to say in your head to help your focus away from the anxiety cause. Inhale: Faith. Exhale: Fear. Repeat 5 times.



SHOULDER ROLLS

We often hold tension in our shoulders and neck which can lead to headaches and soreness after an anxiety attack. Place your hands on your knees, or on your shoulders and take your elbows around in a slow circle backwards to help open the chest and improve posture helping to prevent rounded shoulders. Repeat 5 times. Inhale as you lift the elbows, exhale as you lower them. Take your hands down to your knees if they aren't already, close your eyes and take 5 slow breaths again.



BOUNCING BUTTERFLY

Another great movement pose you can do instead of pacing the floor. Sit with your feet together, holding the feet with your hands. Begin bouncing the knees up and now as fast as you need to, to help “calm your nerves”. Keep going until you can steady and slow your breathing and heart rate down. When you find that you are slowly calming down, slow the bouncing down and either keeping feet as they are, fold your upper body over them, taking 5 slow breaths, or come to Easy Pose for 5 slow breaths.



LEGS UP THE WALL

A resting pose to calm nerves and heart rate easing anxiety. You can do this on your bed, while taking your legs up onto your headboard to rest. Avoid if you are heavily menstruating, pregnant, have high blood pressure or glaucoma as this pose is considered an inversion pose. Let your legs be relaxed and in whatever position is comfortable to you, remembering to keep the knees soft. Close your eyes, place your hands on your legs, on your stomach or down by your sides, palms facing upwards. Close your eyes and take 10 slow deep breaths. Stay here for as long as comfortable to you. To come out of the pose, bend the legs, bringing your knees into your chest, slowly roll over to lying onto your right side, before sitting up into Easy Pose.



CAMEL POSE

It's been said that looking up lifts our mood, and Camel helps open our hearts and relieve chest tightness, so from Easy Pose, take your hands behind you. Inhale and lift the chest, arching your back. Don't compress the back of your neck, keep your chin tucked slightly, and shoulders away from your ears. Take 5 slow long breaths here, before coming back to Easy Pose.

You can take all the above poses and make them into a gentle yoga sequence, taking around 10-15 minutes to spend working on your body, breath and mind, or you can take a pose or 2 and repeat the pose however times you feel you need.

You can also just take a pose and breathing technique and spend 20 minutes, sitting quietly to give yourself some space from the stresses of your day. These poses can also do wonders when you feel an anxiety attack coming on, helping the attack to pass quickly, not be too severe or not even come to surface!

Breathing Techniques

The following 2 breathing techniques can be done while sitting or lying quietly or throughout practicing the above yoga sequence or poses. Breathing is the most vital function of our bodies, the correct breathing allows the body to relax and heal, it lowers blood pressure and heart rate while calming the mind. It improves the function of the respiratory system and can help ease pain, tension, fatigue and illness.

HUMMING BREATH



(Brahmari- Bee): Named because of the humming sound this technique produces, which soothes the mind inducing a meditative state which is amazing for anxiety. The vibrations and sound calms the nervous system.

It helps release pain and fatigue by focusing awareness on the sound diverting your attention away from the cause of the stress. Close the opening of the ears with the pads of your index fingers. Do NOT stick your fingers in the ears which are easily damaged. Close your eyes and focus your gaze between your eyebrows and exhale fully. Inhale through the nose slowly, deeply filling up your lungs. Exhale slow and steady through the nose making a humming sound while keeping your lips closed keep humming until you can't exhale anymore and you naturally take a deep inhale again. Do 3 long and loud rounds before resting then repeat as needed. Avoid if you have ear infections.

ANTI-ANXIETY BREATH



(The most well-known anxiety breath that we all have heard about and possibly done in times of distress. We also have most likely told someone who is having a panic attack, who is in shock or in pain to take slow deep breaths. This breathing technique promotes a sense of being in control, it counteracts anxiety and diverts panic while relieving difficult breathing (dyspnea). It helps reduce troubling emotions such as frustration and anger. It's a great idea to carry out the shoulder rolls before carrying out this breathing practice which helps relax the shoulders and release tension from the neck, jaw and mouth. Inhale slowly, smoothly and deeply through the nose, filling the whole body with calming oxygen. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, as though you are cooling a hot drink. Begin to mentally slow count (between 5-10 depending on your lung ability) as you try to extend and lengthen each exhalations. Exhales help to prevent hyperventilation, so focus on the slow long exhales more than the inhales. Repeat this breath and counting until you can feel your heart rate becomes slower, you feel calmer and your breathing has begun to return to being smooth and not jumpy or shallow.

Take a moment to be proud of yourself.

It doesn't matter how much or how little you did. Sometimes with anxiety attacks, you may do the whole sequence. Sometimes you may do one pose, or just the meditation and feel calmer.

Whatever you did, you did because you listened to what your body needed.

Remember, don't be afraid when you feel an anxiety attack- it's temporary and will pass. Take the power away from the anxiety demons by writing or saying your thoughts and fears, don't bottle up the emotions, it really does have the "weight off your shoulders" feeling. Learn to laugh, dance, day-dream, move, yoga, breathe.

Trust in yourself- you got this! I do hope you have enjoyed this gentle, enjoyable and relaxing yoga guide for anxiety & stress I hope it has inspired you to carry on with practicing yoga whenever you feel you need it.

I hope it has helped in some small way with your anxiety and stress both physically and emotionally. Please don't expect it to work after one go. Like everything, it may take time and practice to see and feel the benefits. Small regular practice will in time give you results.