

Asana this week:

6 Movements Sitting in the Chair -

These stretches are from very basic yoga movements, which can be often done standing and sometimes prone on your mat. The variations can be quite inconspicuous and be used in public while waiting for an appointment or even a train or plane (and in a train or plane). Always thinking about combating the slouching of everyday life as well as the execution of everyday life in many quite normal activities such as: eating, reading, household activities such as cooking, cleaning, folding laundry, creative activities such as needlework, woodwork, etc. Possibly your daily job keeps your head in a more forward prone position (check out the article under misc. for more details).

[adapted from a Yoga International article by Jessica Walsh regarding texting and posture]

For 1-5 the seated position is the same.

Sitting tall in the forward third of your seat, feet firmly planted, hip width apart possibly a block between your knees.

Name: Seated Neck Stretch

Description:

Right hand holding on to the chair directly under the shoulder, engaged and strong.

Left arm slightly to the right palm facing up, no more than 6 inches, reaching.

(you can think of holding a heavy suitcase or your fingers being magnets to the floor)

Bring your chin to your chest and hold it there for a few breaths.

Gently roll your right ear towards your right shoulder, keep the chin contact.

Stay for 4-6 slow breaths before rolling back to midline, breathing and lifting back to neutral.

Physical Benefits:

This stretch can help to prevent tension headaches caused by tight muscles in the neck and scalp. It can also allow you to feel more comfortable sitting at your desk and can relax muscles from a less than perfect night's sleep.

Adaptations/Variations:

By moving the extended arm closer or farther, forward or backward and moving your chin closer to or farther from the shoulder you can feel the stretch in different areas.

Inconspicuous Version: Another option is just nodding the chin down as if you are falling asleep and then tilting to the right/left.

This can also be done without even bringing the chin down and instead just looking ahead as if you are gazing at something from a more side view, a lateral release of the ear to the shoulder, both right and left.

Different movements will effect different tension spots in the neck.

You can also place your hand on a specific tense muscle and move your head until you feel the stretch which effects this point, massaging and imagining your hand is radiating a warmth to release and relax the tension.

Important Disclaimer

The news, suggestions, information, exercises and other items in this list are intended for informational purposes only. Not all exercise is suitable for everyone. To reduce the risk of injury, please consult your Doctor before engaging in any physical and/or therapeutic exercise program. Nothing is intended to be a substitute for professional medical care.

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Name: Simple Cat n' Cow

Description:

Taking your hand to your knees with the arms straight.

Inhale, hinging the torso at the hips/not at the back but with a flat back, bringing the heart forward towards the thighs.

Keeping the head aligned with the shoulders and looking with the eyes forward.

(bringing the chin forward gives the cervical also a stretch but is not necessary)

As you come forward the elbows will bend back towards the waist, keep the arms hugging the body.

Exhale, holding on to the knees with engaged arms which are straightening as you round out the back, leaning back with the belly pulling in and the chin coming to the chest.

Feel the stretch through the entire spinal column, arms, shoulders and neck.

If you would let go of your hands holding on to the knees you would come in contact with the back of the chair. This is not necessary but can show how strong this cat movement can be if you would choose.

Continue with sequential breathing, slow and steady with the movement.

Physical Benefits:

This sequence mobilizes the spine after sitting stationary for a period of time and prepares for further movement. Also being a good way of practicing sequential and slow, rhythmic breathing as each Cow is on the Inhale and each Cat is on the Exhale.

Adaptations/Variations:

Inconspicuous Version: Relaxing your hands on your thighs just drawing the abdomen in as much as you can on the exhale and arching your back on the inhale.

Can also be enjoyed prone on all fours with the movement happening only between the tale bone and the crown of the head. Arms and legs stationary and stacked, shoulders over the hands and hips over the knees with the toes pointed and feet flat stretching the tops of the feet.

Name: Simple Camel

Description:

Hands either on the back (if you need the back support), or on the chair.

Inhale and gently either pressing the hands into the back on down to the chair and you roll your shoulders back, lifting the chest and letting the head tilt back about halfway.

Exhale and return to neutral both back and head.

Be mindful to take deep breaths and expand the rib cage with each inhale, opening the chest for the stretch.

Physical Benefits:

This movement is used for reversing the forward hunching action that is so much a part of our daily lives. as we spend more and more time on computers etc.

Adaptations/Variations:

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Inconspicuous Version: Gentle just taking the shoulders back as you squeeze the shoulder blades together on the inhale and return to neutral from the movement on the exhale. No movement of the head is necessary.

There is always the option if you have good range of extension with your neck that you take the head farther back on the inhale.

Camel can always be done kneeling on your yoga mat with many adaptations depending on your back, see me in class and we will explore the options according to your needs and ability.

Name: Seated Twist

Description:

Taking a deep breath to lengthen the spine placing the left hand on the outside of the right knee (using this as leverage when twisting)

Place the right hand with an engaged arm, slightly behind the hips, holding on to the chair, placement depending upon the traction you need and the stretch which is possible.

Both arms engaged during the twist. Begin pushing the left hand into the right knee while the knee is resisting, the leg does not move.

Gentle turn the torso, from hips to the head to the right bringing the spine, little by little into a spinal twist, all the way to the head. Hold for a few breaths.

Without releasing the twist, slowly turn the head to the left looking over the left shoulder as you continue to turn the body to the right.

Slowly release back to center/neutral and repeat on the other side.

Physical Benefits:

A very basic movement for getting the body to move after sitting for a period of time. Often we are told that any twist can also warm up the body as it wrings the tissues of current liquids and allows for a new saturation of vital nourishment to flow.

Adaptations/Variations:

If you have a spinal issue then a twist may not be for you and would need to be adapted to avoid that portion of the spine which would not benefit from this movement.

Name: Seated Lateral Stretch

Description:

Sitting forward and upright in your chair.

If the chair has legs down the front corners of your chair you can use them as a guide.

Sliding the right hand down the right front leg as you slightly curve the body and reach down.

This stretch will be only slight as the spine does not have a tremendous amount of space to laterally bend. Do not bring the opposite shoulder forward, try to stay on the same lateral plane as if you had your buttocks, shoulder blades and head on the wall with contact during the movement.

Take it slow with the breath and slide down as you exhale then inhale on return to neutral.

Feel the QL's stretch.

Do both sides.

Physical Benefits:

Allowing the spine to move in one of its natural movements, a lateral bend.

Stretch both sides of the vertebrae including the important muscles of the back/torso.

Adaptations/Variations:

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Standing with your back on the wall, feet a few inches away.
Contact with buttocks, shoulder blades and head.
Left foot anchored to the floor, being mindful not to lean, this is a lateral stretch.
Palms facing inward and pinkies touching the wall.
Exhale and slide down the right side of your torso, keeping contact with the wall.
Reverse foot pressure and do the other side.
This is a guide for how it should feel when doing this sitting in a chair.

Name: Savasana with Diaphragmatic Breathing

Description:

This time you may sit all the way back in your chair with support, still upright with head over axis.
If the feet do not comfortably touch the floor you can bring the big toes together and roll the tops of the feet outward bringing the toes towards each other, the heels do not have to touch the floor. The knees should be wide on the chair and the legs completely relaxed. If you can touch the floor with your heels you may prefer this leg positioning as it is far more relaxing, let the weight of the knees draw the legs outward.
At first place the hand on the rib cage, as if you were grabbing a handful of ribs, fingers pointing towards mid-line with the heel of the hands in the vicinity of the side seam of your shirt.
Breathing into the hands with an expansion of the rib cage, this takes practice to learn as it was natural when we were babies but has been replaced with chest heaving over the years.
Be aware that the movement of the shoulders is minimal although you will notice movement in the breast.
After approximately 6+ of this exercise take the hands to the lap, both open and laying on top of each other with the palms facing upward.
The head should remain over the shoulders but the chin slightly relaxed, eyes closed.
Remain here and continue your Diaphragmatic Breathing.

Physical Benefits and Helpers:

Learning again how to breath Diaphragmatically will increase the oxygen in your blood bringing numerous benefits to the body.
Our ribs are lined with muscles which will help us in reestablishing this most healthy and what once was normal breathing pattern.
The hardest obstacle for many is not letting the shoulders heave upward with the belly coming in on the inhale (the opposite of what you want), this is often a reverse breathing which can be changed with practice.
Taking a Theraband around the back of the body, crossing in over in front and holding on to it with both hands, rather tightly and then trying to expand it will help in developing this technique and these muscles.
Practice, and more practice.....
Natural breathing: Inhale belly slightly goes out as diaphragm descends/chest expands.
Exhale: belly comes inward towards the spine as the diaphragm returns.

General Class:

For **Morning Wake-Up Stretch** I have added this session and I know it has confused many but we will continue with this new movement.
A 6x cross over roll to the R, with the L leg after the 6x Apanasana/Wind Expeller.
Continuing then with the cross over/twist to the R, being static and still for three breaths
Then the opening with hand to the ankle for three breaths.
Then continue from the beginning on the other side.

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Besides the work in the chair we continued with our **5 Tibetans**.

Keeping #1 which is turning to the right out of the same number limit. Let yourself do this one daily and see the benefit for your balance working up to 21 to the right.

The other four Tibetans should be the same number and increase according to your ability.

If you are stuck on one I did show some more alternatives which we will continue working on.

There are also alternatives in the chair for both #4- Picnic Table and #5-Updog/Downdog,

Pranayama:

Diaphragmatic Breathing: #6 in Chair see listing.

Essential Oil:

Elevation (same as last week and still powerful)

Music:

Various

Quote:

Removing the Armor by Max Strom - *a page from his book "A Life Worth Breathing"*

Removing your armor is done partly through breath and postures and intention, but it also takes conscious attention on our part as we move through our day.

Practice being open to everyone as if they were part of your extended family.

Move through your day as if it were your charge to encourage joyfulness and calm.

Pay special attention to those in lower social positions and in the service industry. Address people in service positions, such as busboys/waitresses, as "sir" or "miss" since they are often ignored altogether and regularly treated as slave labor.

It is important for them - as well as for us - to treat them with extra respect.

Stop and talk to the parking lot attendant; look him in the eye, and thank him instead of just giving him the money and leaving, or, even worse, taking on the cell phone while in the midst of your transaction.

(If someone has a name tag on, use their name in sharing a "thank you" or "have a nice day")

Talking on the cell phone as you interact with others is demeaning and makes them feel like a nonentity.

If your true wish is unity and transformation, this kind of behavior must cease forever. As seekers of truth, it is incumbent upon us to treat everyone with respect and care.

This exercise will bring an unexpected vitality to your life, relationships and reputation.

Miscellaneous:

additional information/articles on texting and posture:

<http://www.medicaldaily.com/texting-puts-50-pounds-pressure-your-spine-adding-poor-postures-side-effects-311152>

