

Using Yoga and Meditation Techniques to Relax the Mind, Strengthen the Body and Restore Proper Balance.

Points of Discussion:

Ways to combat repetitive stress injury:

1. Cultivate suppleness and strength in the body
2. Sitting with good posture allows more freedom of movement and reduces strain on muscles and joints
3. Practicing yoga/Mindfulness teaches you to be present in your body so that you're more likely to pay attention to early signs of discomfort.
4. Paying attention to early signs of tension and injury will help break habitual patterns and help educate to take time out to stretch, strengthen and tone tight areas.

Ways to relax the body and mind when feeling anxious, stressed or pressed for time:

Guided Relaxation: Yoga Nidra (Lying down and keeping the body still as the mind moves through every point of the body from top of head to toes on the front of the body and from toes to head on the back of the body.

Breathwork: Closing eyes and matching length of inhale with length of exhale, counting if necessary using counts of 4, 6, or 8.

Ways to Energize the Body when Feeling Fatigued or Tired:

Taking a short, mental physical break preferably outside when possible to increase oxygen (walking stairs)

Doing specific exercises

1. **Abdominal core work** (yoga sit-ups, bicycles) Activates breath and coordination with movement, strengthens core, active break from reality
2. **Nadi Sodhana** (Alternate Nostril Breathing) Activates and balances Right Brain and Left Brain
3. **Blocked areas of Tension:**
 - Wrists:** With palms up and pulling each finger down towards ground while supporting joint with other hand; wrist rolls
 - Eyes:** Close eyes making big, long SLOW circles in each direction like the face of a clock.
 - Ears:** Activating energy points on ears by massage
 - Head, neck and shoulders:** Self-massage to increase blood flow
 - Shoulder Openers:** Archer Arms. Using strap, towel or belt when necessary. Arm overhead bends and lower arms bends and hands try to connect behind your back. Do both sides.

4. Inversions: Downward Dog, Ragdoll to bring and reverse lethargic or stagnant energy.

When in Doubt, do Sun Salutations!

1. *Standing (Inhale lift arms)*
 2. *Forward Fold (Exhale)*
 3. *Half Way Lift (Inhale)*
 4. *Plank (Push-up position) (Exhale)*
 5. *Upward Dog/Cobra (Inhale)*
 6. *Downward Dog (Exhale – then hold for 3-5 Rounds of Inhale and Exhale)*
 7. *Step to Forward Fold / Half Way Lift (alternate feet) (Inhale)*
 8. *Rise to Standing with arms over head connecting at prayer at top and exhale as prayer lands at front of sternum (heart center.)*
- Repeat as many times as necessary ☺*

Standing / Sitting

Standing or sitting for long periods of time compresses the spine and transfers most of the weight into hip joints. It's important to have proper posture while sitting or standing. Stabilizing core

Key Points to Remember:

1. Disperse weight of feet evenly on balls of feet and center heel
2. Lift ten toes and close eyes. Possibly rocking to find midline through body from tailbone to top of head.
3. Tuck Tailbone towards the ground to lengthen spine
4. Pull Belly in to create space in lower back
5. Pull two bottom ribs in and up
6. Relax shoulder blades together and down the back away from the ears
7. Lengthen through back of the neck
8. Bring awareness to jaw and tongue

Hip Openers and Stabilizers:

Setu- Bandasana (Bridge) - From lying down, bend knees and place feet directly under knees, skimming heels with fingertips. Tuck tailbone to flatten lower back onto ground. Lift hips and elongate knees away from chest. Keep arms on ground for support or interlace behind lower back and shimmy shoulders together for slight back bending. Keep pressing feet into ground and keep tucking tailbone towards back of knees. And don't forget to breathe!

Low Lunges - With back knee on the ground will stretch front of hips (flexors) – Don't forget to pull belly in even when arms over head for more backbending and stretching. Repeat both legs.

Pigeon Pose - From Downward Dog lunge right leg to left wrist and right knee to right wrist making your right shin parallel to front of mat. Square your hips so left front thigh is facing down towards the mat. You may put a towel or pillow or

something small under right butt for support between the floor.

Janu Sirsana - From seated one leg is straight out in front of you and one leg is bent so sole of the foot touches inner thigh of straight leg. Bend and fold body over straight leg. Repeat other side.

Passchimotanasana: (Seated Straight leg Forward Fold) - From seated both legs are straight out in front of you. You may bend your knees as much as possible to keep your back from rounding. Keep back as flat as possible. Bring sternum towards toes but relax the head.

Viparita Karani - Legs up the wall with or without a strap or belt around shins or over the seat of a chair that's the same height as your bent legs. It takes all the weight off the hips and helps the Psoas muscles and hip stabilizers to reset. It's very restoring. This one is great to do for lower back relief and release and before going to bed. The weight of the head is on the floor and the brain rest.

Closing and Gentle Reminders

The body is an intricate and complicated machine that's relatively easy to keep functioning. It functions very well as long as you keep feeding it energy. It's like a car in many ways, in that, even if something is wrong or needs to be addressed, it will still drive and function but if you ignore signs of wear and tear, it eventually it will break down. If the front alignment was off, the tires will be uneven and need to be replaced and if you don't change the oil, the engine burn on fumes. But unlike a car, we can't replace our limbs or most of our organs and what we feed our bodies is just as important as how we work them.

So learning how to move from a strong and controlled center and keeping the lines of communication from our engine will help keep us strong and healthy. The more you understand your body and how it functions and the more connected you are to your body, the more aware you are of when something is not working at its optimum level and when you address it, then you develop a new way of being. If you don't address it, it'll have a 'domino effect' and what was originally minor may eventually be a major concern that has to be addressed.

Even though your job is stressful and requires a lot of deadlines and working for long periods of time, make sure you keep your car running on good oil. Breathe while you are working, take short and refreshing breaks completely taking yourself away from your project so that when you return – even if it's 5 minutes - you'll have a new fresh perspective and so will your body, your mind and your spirit.

Peace and namaste,
Amy