

YOGA FOR YOUR CROWN CHAKRA

POSES TO OPEN SAHASRARA

PADMASANA / LOTUS POSE

'Padma' means lotus flower. This pose is used to prepare for deep meditation. It is said that it is the 'destroyer of all diseases' and helps awaken kundalini. However, you need hip, knee and ankle flexibility, so if you have a knee/hip/ankle injury, sit in Easy Pose instead. To enter Padmasana, sit with your legs straight in front of you. Inhale, bend your right knee and hug it to your chest. Exhale, place your right ankle in the crease of the left hip, sole of the foot facing the sky. Bend your left knee and cross your left ankle over the right shin, resting the foot in the left hip crease. Press the groins towards the floor and sit up straight. Rest the palms on your knees, facing up in Gyan mudra (thumb and index fingers together, other fingers extended). Close your eyes, soften the face and gaze at your third eye. Breathe deeply, hold for 1-2 min. Release slowly by gently extending the legs in front of you.

ADHO MUKHA SUKHASANA VARIATION / EASY POSE WITH FORWARD BEND VARIATION

You can sit with your legs in Lotus Pose, simply cross-legged, or in Easy Pose: bring the right heel to the perineum and align the left heel to the right heel. Inhale, lengthen the torso and interlace the fingers behind you. Exhale, slowly bend forward from the hips, not the waist; work towards bringing the crown of the head to the mat, as you lift the arms up behind you (see pic). Alternatively, bring your palms on top of each other in front of you, and gently rest the forehead on the top of your hand. You can also place blankets under the outer thighs to support the hips and knees. Breathe slow and steady for 5-10 breaths. Inhale and slowly come up. This pose helps us turn inwards and relieve fatigue, anxiety and depression.

BADDHA KONASANA VARIATION / BOUND ANGLE POSE VARIATION

Sit with your legs straight in front of you. If you have sciatica, sit on a cushion to elevate the hips. Inhale, bend your legs, bring the sole of the feet together, pull the heels towards the pelvis, then drop the knees gently to the side and press the heels together. Inhale, lengthen the spine, interlace your fingers under your feet and slide them forward, away from you. Exhale, fold forward, round the back, let the head hang towards the feet. To go deeper, bring the crown of the head to rest in the feet, allowing the energy to travel circularly throughout the whole body.

VRKSASANA / TREE POSE

Slowly come to a standing position, in Tadasana, Mountain Pose. Spread your toes and root the feet in the ground. Lift the knee caps, pelvis in neutral position, draw the navel towards the spine, lift the rib cage, relax the shoulders and grow tall towards the sky through the crown. Shift the weight of the body into the right leg, slowly lift the left leg, find your balance. Bring the sole of the left foot as high as you can on the right inner thigh. Keep the hips levelled and gently push the left knee outwards. Keep the spine nice and tall, drop the shoulders. Bring your hands in prayer position, Anjali mudra, at your heart centre or above your head. Gaze at a point 2m in front of you to help you focus. Stay for 30 secs to 1 min and release to Tadasana before swapping sides. In this pose, the energy travels from your root to the top of the head, aligning all chakras and rejuvenating the mind.

ARDHA ANUVITTASANA / STANDING PRAYER BACKBEND

Stand in Tadasana, as described above. Bring your hands together in front of your chest in Anjali mudra. Take 5 deep breaths through the nose. Inhale, feel the energy coming up from the earth into your whole body. Exhale, feel the energy travelling down from your crown to your feet. Plant your feet firmly in the mat, engage the legs, lift the torso upwards, as you lengthen your spine. Lift the chest and draw your shoulder blades towards the rib cage, gently opening your heart. Bring your fingertips to your forehead and feel the back lifting the front of the body. Engage your core and continue gracefully into the back bend, without straining the back or the neck. Remain open to the abundance and to opportunities that the Universe delivers to you. Hold for 3-4 breaths, if comfortable. Don't force it. Bring the hands back to the heart, inhale and come back to centre.

SALAMBA SIRASASANA / SUPPORTED HEADSTAND

Kneel, interlace your fingers, place your forearms on the mat, elbows are shoulder width apart. Press the forearms, wrists and outer edges of the hands firmly into the ground. Place the top of your head on the mat, the back of the head resting against the clasped hands. Inhale, lift the knees off the mat and start walking your feet closer to your head, like an inverted 'V'. Press the shoulder blades together towards the tailbone, and press the forearms into the floor. If your pelvis is stacked above your head, exhale and lift the feet off the floor, legs together and straight. Engage the abdominal wall and raise your legs until they form one line with the torso, perpendicular to the floor. Another option is to bring the knees bent to your chest and slowly raise the legs perpendicular to the floor. Keep the body weight evenly balanced across the forearms and continue to lift the tailbone towards your heels. Hold from 10 secs to 3 min and breathe steadily. Headstand calms the brain and stimulates the pineal and pituitary glands.

SAVASANA / CORPSE POSE

Savasana is a pose of complete relaxation with nothing else to do but simply being, which makes it one of the most challenging poses. It is usually performed at the end of yoga practice to allow the body to integrate all the efforts of the practice. Lie on your back in neutral position with your heels as wide as the yoga mat and with the arms relaxed on the sides of the body, palms facing up. Slightly tuck your chin towards your chest to avoid tension in the neck. Relax the tongue, the jaw and the shoulders, spread the shoulder blades equally on the floor and spread your collarbones. Let your eyes and brain sink towards the back of the head. Savasana quiets the physical and mental bodies. Allow yourself to let go and to surrender completely. Stay in Savasana for 5 min for 30 min of practice. To exit, exhale and roll onto your right side. Stay here for a few breaths. On an exhale, slowly come back to a seated position. Close your eyes and bring your hands together at your chest. Give thanks to yourself and your practice for connecting deeper within yourself.

