

De-Stress Yoga with Joanne Greene

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Hello, everyone, and welcome to De-stress Yoga with Joanne Green. My name is Kaitlin Hennessy. I'm the program coordinator at Global Connections. And here at Global Connections, our aim is to provide engaging co and extracurricular activities for online students, no matter where they live. And tonight presenting is Joanne Green.

And throughout the evening, please feel free to use the chat box to discuss tonight's content or submit questions at any point. And the chat box is located right beneath the IFrame for the YouTube video. You'll see myself and Kristin in there this evening. And we'll be taking your questions. Also, you can let us know if you have any technical difficulties, and we'll do our best to help you.

OK, thank you so much.

JOANNE GREEN: Thanks, Kaitlin. Like Kaitlin said, my name's Joanne. And I've been teaching yoga for about 18 years for university recreation.

And university recreation is really fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Global Campus students through the well being online program. And so we were really happy to be asked to do this workshop for you all about stress, especially at this time of year when we head into the holiday season. But we have to get through finals first. This is a really timely subject.

Now, yoga classes usually are centered around the idea of mindfulness. And that's where we'll spend most of our time today. Mindfulness in yoga go hand in hand.

And mindfulness is an awareness of what's happening right now without judgment-- pretty simple concept. Takes a little practice to really use that in our everyday lives. And we can use that in a variety of ways within our life.

And mindfulness is really beneficial in multiple aspects of our life. So there is mounting evidence to show that mindfulness not only helps to reduce stress, but helps to increase our inner strength. So we're more able to deal with future stresses when they arise.

Mindfulness is also beneficial in that it can help to decrease anxiety. It can help you perform better in work or athletics. Also, mindfulness helps you to get more out of every moment of every day.

And so we're going to spend a lot of our time here in practically working with mindfulness. And so we'll start into that right away. And at the end of our practice today, I will share with you some additional ways to use mindfulness, as well as we have a handout that you can use, which has some resources. And it's a small list. There are a lot of resources out there that you can incorporate mindfulness into the rest of your life.

So if you have a towel or a mat, you may want to use it for our practice today. We're going to do a little bit of yoga, some mindful movement, as well as a meditation. If you don't have a mat, it's totally fine. You may want a towel to help to put something soft under your knees. And also, you may want an extra towel or a blanket to sit on. Because we're going to start seated today.

And so I'm going to start by sitting on a yoga block. If you have these, these are really nice. They're pretty inexpensive to purchase at a sports store. And they are really nice to use for a variety of ways in the yoga practice, if you'd like to start one.

If you don't have a block, a blanket would work really well. And you can just fold up a blanket and sit on it.

I'll use the block for right now. And I'm just going to sit on the edge of my block, sitting cross-legged. And I feel like I'm sitting off the edge of my block. So it should be really comfortable for me to sit up tall.

If I use a prop like a blanket and it's not comfortable for me to sit up tall, I may want to add another blanket so that I'm sitting-- my hips are lifted up higher. We'll sit here for a few minutes before we move on with the rest of our practice.

So while everybody gets comfortable, the handout that we have for you has a few different websites that you can use to look at to find more information about mindfulness. There are a few books that I have quoted and that I have cited at the bottom of the handout as well.

So once you get seated, we'd like to sit up tall. And if we feel comfortable, we get to close our eyes. So we can sit with eyes closed. And once we close our eyes, we'll lengthen our spine. So you might imagine there's a wall behind us, and we're sitting up and against the wall.

Let's roll our shoulders back a few times. This is something we'd actually like to do several times a day if we can. Just roll our shoulders backwards a few times. Roll our shoulders forward a few times. And even bring shoulders up towards our ears, and then our shoulder blades down towards our hips.

This helps to strengthen our upper back. This helps to open up our chest, if we roll shoulders back. It's really beneficial for our posture. And we tend to spend a lot of our day rounded forward.

So let's settle in now to a comfortable seated pose, eyes closed. And let's give ourselves permission to use this next 35, 40 minutes to practice a little bit of yoga. So give yourself permission to set aside your to-do list, to let go of thoughts about the past or projections for the future when you find them, and just spend time in the present moment.

Start to lengthen our inhales and our exhales. So let's take a deeper breath in. Let's imagine bringing that breath all the way down into our belly so our bellies expand like they're balloons. When we breathe out, let's exhale fully and notice our bellies will deflate.

For the next minute or so, that's all we need to do. Sit tall, breathe in deeply, letting our bellies inflate, and then exhale fully, letting our bellies deflate.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Now we might find that there's other thoughts that enter our minds, not just those on our breath. And that's OK. That's going to happen throughout our practice today and any practice that you take on for mindfulness or meditation.

When you do notice a thought, just be aware of what it is. And then let it go, rather than getting frustrated that you're distracted. Just acknowledge that you had the thought that's not about your breath. And as you exhale, let it go.

A part of being mindful and aware of what's happening around us is noticing what's happening in our bodies. So let's notice where our bodies touch our blanket or our block and the matter of the floor. Notice what our legs feel like because we've been sitting cross-legged for a few minutes now. Check in with our shoulders. Maybe roll them backward one more time, just to settle into a more comfortable position.

And as we start into some more movement, let's stay focused on our breath and on our bodies - so how things feel in our bodies right now. Stay in tune with our breath. And let's keep a non-judgmental frame of mind. So that if we notice that we're being distracted, we just acknowledge that distraction without judgment and let it go.

One thing we'd like to keep in mind though is that if we check in and we find something is not feeling good for our bodies today, we should pick something that is. So if I'm not giving you an option that feels good, pick something that does, even if it's something completely different. Nothing in a yoga practice should ever hurt, cause you strain or pain.

Let's release our hands to our sides. Maybe shake out our hands and our arms a little bit. On our next inhale, we're going to take hands out toward the sidewalls. Big reach up for the ceiling.

You might want to open our eyes here. Once we get going, you can close them again. Bring our hands together and then down into our heart center. If we press our thumbs slightly into our chest, we can connect with our breath more fully.

The start of our next inhale, we'll sweep our hands out and around. Big reach up. And on our exhale, let's bring hands into heart center.

A few more just like this. As we reach out and up, notice our shoulders will move up towards our ears. When we bring our hands to heart center, let's bring our shoulders back and down. So we end seated tall, shoulders away from our ears. A few more times.

Now if we're sweeping our hands out to the sides like I'm showing right now doesn't feel good for your shoulders, you might choose sticking hands out in front instead-- reaching hands out in front and up or maybe hands straight up or just keeping hands right where they are. Let's reach up one more time.

Now let's drop our left hand down toward the floor. Reach the right hand up. On our inhale, let's reach both hands up. Let's release our other hand. And reach up high to the sky with that hand that's still up.

Let's take both hands up. Release the left as we exhale. A little bit of stretch along the right side of our bodies. A couple more here. Inhale to reach up high. And exhale to release.

So as we work through our practice today, I'm going to give a few different options. If you know different options in your yoga practice that add more work or reduce the intensity that you prefer, please choose those.

And let's inhale. Reach hands up. Let's take hands into our heart center.

We've been sitting for a long time. It might be uncomfortable now. Let's release. Let's take our block off to the side. And I'm going to grab another block because I'm going to use the other block later.

And we're going to sit back towards our heels in what we call Child's Pose or Shell Stretch. Now we'd like to extend our arms out as long as we can and point our index finger off the end of our mat, spreading our fingers out wide. This gives us a good base to help support us as we shift forward into a Plank position. And you can work through Plank from your knees or from your toes if you'd like more work.

As we exhale, let's sit back towards our heels, just sitting back far enough for a little bit of stretch. On our inhale, let's shift forward again, sucking our shoulders just over our fingertips. If we're out in front, we might need to walk our hands forward a little bit. And then we'll sit back into our Child's Pose. Let's do three or four more of these at your pace.

And this might be a nice time to close your eyes. Whenever you have a chance to work with eyes closed, it can be really beneficial. Because it allows you to tune more fully into what you're doing and off of some of the visual distractions that might be present in your space.

All right, the next time we move forward into our Plank, let's hold here for a moment. When we're in our Plank Pose, we'd like to press down into our first two fingers a little bit more than

the rest of the fingers to lighten the load on our wrists. And we'd like to have a slight bend in our elbows, just so we haven't locked out the elbow joint.

The next step, we're going to add a little bend in our elbows. So we're going to let her elbows move back and away from our sides a bit. This is a Half Crocodile. And then we'll press back up into Plank. And we'll sit back into Child's Pose.

Let's do that one more time. Let's come on forward into Plank. And then we can lower either a quarter of the way or no more than halfway for our Crocodile. We'll press back up to our plank. And we'll sit back into our Child's Pose.

Now that we're in our Child's Pose, let's pause for just a moment. Take a couple deep breaths. Notice where we might feel a stretch as we breathe in deeply and if that stretch changes as we exhale fully.

Now let's lift up into Quadruped or hands and knees. We'd like to use the same hand position. But this time, we'll have our wrists a little bit in front of our shoulders. We'd like our hips over our knees.

And on our next exhale, we're going to arch our backs up toward the ceiling like a cat might do when it's startled. This is Cat Pose. When we breathe in, we're going to lift her tailbones up. Lift our belly buttons, our chest, and our chins slightly. This is Cow Pose.

On our exhale, we'll arch our backs into Cat Pose. And on our inhale, we'll lengthen, making sure to lift our belly buttons to help support through our back into Cow. Let's close our eyes. Let's do about five or six more of these Cat Cow.

If you find yourself getting distracted, then start your transition from your tailbone. So you work from your tailbone up your back to transition from cat to cow and vice versa. Let's do one more of these. And then let's meet back in our Child's Pose.

From our Child's Pose, let's transition into Downward Dog. It has a little more intensity than our Child's Pose, but can be used in place of Child's Pose at any time. Let's tuck our toes under, and we'll lift our hips up toward the ceiling and back toward the wall behind us in what we call upside down V sometimes.

In this pose, we'd like to focus more on lengthening our spine and pressing away from the mat through our hands, through our shoulders. Then we are worried about straightening our legs. So big bend in our knees will still give us some stretch for the backs of our legs, but allows us to really lengthen through our torso.

On our inhale, let's shift forward into our Plank. So we're back to that place where we've got shoulders over fingertips. And as we exhale, let's lift her hips up. Press them back toward the wall behind us-- back to Downward Dog. Let's do this about three more times-- your pace.

And if you're going to practice on your own after this, you can do as many repetitions of this as you'd like. This is not only a nice warm up exercise, but this also helps to strengthen your back and your shoulders.

And after our last one, let's meet in Downward Dog just for a couple of breaths. Notice the difference between our Downward Dog and our Child's Pose. While these poses are interchangeable, they do feel a lot different. There's a good place for both of them. And it just depends on what you feel like you need most at that moment.

Let's release our knees. Let's sit back into a Child's Pose for just a moment.

Let's return one more time to our Quadruped or all fours. Up onto hands and knees with shoulders just behind our wrists to help protect our shoulders. We're going to work through what's called spinal balance.

On our next inhale, we'll reach our right hand out for the wall in front of us as far as we can. And then we're going to extend our left leg, dragging our toes along the floor, reaching out through our heel, maybe picking your toes off the mat at the last moment. As we exhale, we'll release our hand and our foot back to where we started. And on our next inhale, let's reach out with our left hand and maybe our right foot. And release on our exhale.

Let's work through this on our pace. As we inhale, we reach out the hand and opposite foot. And as we exhale, we place our hand and our knee back to the mat. We'd like to imagine that we've balanced a cup of water on our backs. We're trying to keep any of the water from spilling as we transition from spinal balance back into Quadruped.

If we need some more challenge in this movement, we can close our eyes. Noticing that when eyes are closed, it becomes much more difficult to balance. And this is our last one here. We'll meet back in our Quadruped. And let's sit back into our Child's Pose.

The sequence that we're going to work on today involves lunging. And so we're going to practice our lunging to find the most comfortable way for us to transition before we head into our sun salutations. So with our Lunge, we're going to step our left foot towards our hands. And then we're going to walk her foot out in front of our knee. We'd like to end up with our foot in front of our knee.

And then we're going to step back into our Child's Pose. So a couple of ways to do this might be to shift our weight back, bring our foot back, return to Child's Pose. Or we can lift all the way up, step forward, and bring our hands either onto our front leg or all the way onto the floor.

Another nice option is if we have blocks, we can use them to help lift her hands up, which gives us more space to work. So let's try this one more time on each side. And we can lift the blocks up to a higher place. We just need to be careful that they don't tip over on us.

If the blocks don't feel good, you can also put a chair on each side of your mat, so we're lifted up even higher. Then we've got something higher to press off of to step back and then sit back in the Child's Pose. Let's do two more on each side.

We have the option here if we want it to step forward and back from our Downward Dog. For some of us, this works better. For some of us, we prefer to work from Child's Pose. We get to pick what feels best for us here.

And this is our last one. And we'll meet in Lunge. So now that we've stepped forward to Lunge-- sometimes I step partway, and then I just inch my foot out in front of my knee.

Let's step all the way in to what we call Forward Fold. So we'll step our back foot in to meet our front feet about hip width apart. And we'd like to take a big enough bend in our knees that this is comfortable for the backs of our legs. A little bit of stretch, but not too much. We can even rest hands on our legs instead of bringing them all the way to the floor.

Before we lift up, we want to take a really big bend in our knees. And then we can take our hands out again. And we're going to reach up high for the ceiling. Here you might find a little bit of a back bend.

Now let's bring our hands into heart center. We're going to sit back into an easy chair-- pretending that there's actually a chair behind us. This is Chair Pose. Inhale, we'll sweep hands up-- big reach up for the ceiling. And exhale. Let's sit back into Chair.

Let's do a few more of these. Let's inhale. Stand tall. Exhale-- let's sit back into our chair. Two more, and then let's meet in Chair.

You don't need to sit too far in our Chair. This might be shallower than, say, a squat we practice in the weight room. Once we get here though, let's pull our shoulders. Roll them back a few times.

Now let's notice where we feel weight in our feet. Just for a moment, let's shift our weight towards the outsides of our feet. And if we look down at our knees, we might see that our knees move out pretty wide. And it may not feel very comfortable.

Now let's shift the weight to the insides of our feet. And our knees might come close together or maybe even touch. Now let's find a place where we can feel like we have weight over the middle of our foot-- both in the ball of our foot and our heel. And let's look down at our knees again.

Let's inhale. Stand tall. Because I kept us in Chair for a really long time. And let's exhale. Sit back into Chair one more time.

Let's rock forward toward the balls of our feet-- so towards our toes. Notice where our knees are. They're probably over our toes. And we'd like knees over or behind. So let's shift our weight back till our toes can lift or wiggle.

So this position here is what we call Pada Bandha or Foot Lock. This is really important in our standing poses, especially chair. Because it helps us to keep our knees in alignment. Keeps our joints happy.

Let's inhale. Stand up tall. And now on our exhale, we'll bend our knees a lot. And we're going to release all the way to the floor into our Forward Fold.

On our inhale, we're going to take our hands up onto our legs. And we're going to lift up until our backs feel long. It's what we would call Half Lift or Monkey.

Then we'll release. We can bend our knees as much as we need to. Put our hands on the floor. Step left foot back into Lunge.

The next time we inhale, let's walk our hands up onto our leg. Our back heel will stay off the floor. And if we want, we can bend our back knee a little bit or a lot. On our exhale, we're going to bring our hands to the floor. And we'll step back into our Child's Pose or Downward Dog if you prefer.

So we're getting into a little bit more intensity here. On our inhale, let's shift forward to our Plank-- shoulders over our fingertips. As we exhale, we'll lower half way to our Crocodile. Release our hips as we need to. And then we'll roll our shoulders back.

Lift our hearts and lift our hands. This is Cobra Pose. We're paused for just a moment here in Cobra, because this is a really good pose for our posture and for our core strength.

So we'll pull belly button up slightly. We're going to lift our chest using the strength strength in our backs. And we can lift our hands and drop our elbows. Bring our shoulders down and back.

Now we'll release our hands to the mat, pressing the hands and knees up to our Plank. And then we get to sit back to Child's Pose or Downward Dog, if we prefer.

We'll take left foot forward into our Lunge again. And then the next time we exhale, we'll step our other foot into our Forward Fold. A little hamstring stretch here.

And let's take a big bend in our knees. We're going to sweep our hands around. Take hands up toward the ceiling-- Extended Mountain. And sit back into our Chair. We completed one round of our Sun Salutation.

Let's inhale. Sweep hands up. And we'll exhale, bend our knees a lot, release our hands to the floor. We're going to do the same thing on the right side.

On our inhale, we'll lift up to our Monkey Pose. Bring your hands up as far as we need to be comfortable. Bring our hands to the mat. Step right foot back into our Lunge. Keep our back heel lifted as we walk hands up onto our front leg, or we can reach hands up toward the ceiling if we'd like.

We'll release our hands to the mat. Step back into our Child's Pose or a Downward Dog as we exhale. And on our inhale, transition into our Plank Pose from knees or from toes. On our exhale, we'll lower halfway to crocodile.

And release our hips. Lift our hearts. Pretend we squeeze a tennis ball in between our shoulder blades.

Now let's press into hands and knees, up into our Plank, back to our Child's Pose or Down Dog. We'll step our right foot forward on our inhale. Walk our foot in front of our knee. Reach through the top of our head for a little stretch. And we'll step into our Forward Fold.

Let's bend our knees as we sweep hands around. Big reach up for the ceiling. And we'll sit back into our Chair Pose.

Let's do a few more rounds here. Inhale, sweeping hands up. And exhale into our Forward Fold.

So we're tuning into what this movement feels like as we lift up into our Monkey Pose-- finding a place in the pose that feels good. We will release. Step left foot back to Lunge.

Same thing as we move into our Crescent Lunge. Tune in to how muscles and joints are feeling. Find a place in this pose that feels good. To release, step back into either Child's Pose or Downward Dog.

As we inhale, we transition into our Plank. And as we exhale, we release to Crocodile, take our hips to the floor. Lift our chest into Cobra. Lightly press into the tops of our feet. Squeeze a tennis ball between her shoulder blades. And then press into hands and knees so we move up to Plank and back to either Child's Pose or a Downward Dog.

We'll step on our left foot forward into Lunge again. So we can step our foot forward and then walk it out in front of our knee. If we'd like, we can lift our hands up. A bit more stretch for the back hip flexor. And then we'll step into our Forward Fold.

We'll bend our knees, sweep hands around and up, big reach for the ceiling. Sit back into our Chair. And let's inhale. Reach hands up again. We'll do the same thing, right side.

Feel free to work on your pace if you'd like. If you're working with me, we exhale to Forward Fold. We inhale into our Monkey Pose, pulling shoulders down and back. And then release. Right foot back into Lunge.

We walk or sweep our hands up into our version of Crescent Lunge. Bring our hands to the mat. Step back to either Child's Pose or Down Dog.

And inhale into our plank from knees or from toes. On our exhale, we lower half way to Crocodile. On our inhale, we lift up into our Cobra. If we're familiar with Up Dog and that's our preference, we can use that pose.

We press up into our plank, back to our Child's Pose or our Downward Dog. And we'll step right foot forward towards our hands and then walk our foot in front of our knee so we can lift up into Crescent Moon as an option.

Let's release our hands. Step into our Forward Fold. And that's bend our knees. Reach hands around big. Reach up for the ceiling. Sit back into Chair. Inhale to the top.

We're going to do one more each side. This is a nice sequence to use to get our blood flowing, get some movement in when we need a little break. We'll step left foot back to Lunge.

And repetition can be really beneficial in our mindfulness practice. So we can set a sequence. And then we can just flow with our breath for as many times as we'd like through that sequence.

Inhale to Plank and lower halfway to Crocodile. Inhale into our Cobra. Exhale, pressing up into our Plank, back into our Child's Pose or our Downward Dog.

We'll take left foot forward into Lunge. Maybe lift up into our Crescent Moon as we inhale. And then we'll step into our Forward Fold as we exhale. Sweep our hands around and up into our Extended Mountain. Maybe a little back bend here if we'd like.

As we sit in to Chair, make sure I've got weight over the middle of our foot. Toes can lift or wiggle.

And inhale. Stand tall. This is our last one.

Exhale into our Forward Fold. Inhale into our Monkey Pose. And exhale, release. Step our right foot back into Lunge. Inhale into Crescent Lunge-- hands up or hands down.

And exhale to release. Step back to Child's Pose or Down Dog if we prefer. Transition forward into our Plank on our inhale. Lower halfway to Crocodile. Exhale.

And Cobra Pose on our inhale. Plank on our exhale, then Child's Pose or Down Dog.

On her inhale, we'll step right foot forward into our Crescent Moon. And on our exhale, we'll step into our Forward Fold. Let's inhale into our Extended Mountain. Exhale, sit back into our Chair.

Inhale, let's reach up into our Extended Mountain. And exhale, let's sit back into our Chair. Let's hold here for a few breaths. This might be a nice time to close her eyes.

One more time. Find that place where we can feel weight in our heels. Our toes can lift or wiggle. We've got weight over the middle of our feet. So we'd like to feel weight on the inside and outside to the bottom of each foot. And then we imagine lifting her arches a bit.

And let's inhale. Sweep hands up. Let's exhale. Take hands in to heart center.

Next to add into our mindfulness yoga practice is some balance work. If you have a favorite balance pose, you're welcome to practice it. I'm going to lead us through a Tree Pose, which is a pose that you'll see in many yoga classes.

And with this one, we're going to start by turning our right knee out to the side. And we can stay right here if we'd like-- our toes on the floor Tree Pose. If we'd like to add some more balance challenge, we can lift our foot up either over our calf or higher. We just want to pay attention to not pressing into our knee with our foot. So we'd like to keep our foot feather weight up over our leg.

And we're going to continue to breathe deeply here, maybe adding the option of lifting our hands up toward the ceiling. It really helps in balance poses to find something to focus on-- so something to look at maybe in front of you or down on the floor.

And let's bring our hands back into our heart center. Knee points forward. Release our foot. We might need to shake our legs out a little bit there.

Let's switch to the other side. So we'll lift our left knee and turn our toes out to the side. Same thing-- we can stay here with toes on the floor or we can lift our foot up a little bit or a lot. Being careful not to press into our right knee. With the option of maybe lifting one or both hands up and taking a few deep breaths here.

So finding a focal point makes this pose easier to hold. If we need more challenge on this, we can always close one or both eyes. Or we could shift our gaze. So if we look around, it gets a lot harder to keep our balance.

And let's bring our hands into our heart center. Bring our knee forward. And release our foot. Shake our legs out a little bit here.

Let's take our hands up toward the ceiling. Big reach up for the sky. And on our exhale, sit one more time into Chair.

Bring our shoulders down and back. Notice what this pose feels like right now. Notice where we feel muscles working to hold us in this pose. Notice we might feel like muscles are stretching. And this is a nice way to practice mindfulness in any pose in our yoga practice.

All right, let's inhale. Stand up. We've done enough Chairs today. Let's step towards the end of our mat.

We're going to Forward Fold. Release into our Forward Fold Pose. So we get a bit of a hamstring stretch here-- a group of muscles in between our knee and our glutes.

If we have a block, this would be a place where we might use a bit of a bolster here so that our hands don't have to go all the way to the floor. If we don't have a bolster, we can use a chair or we can just put our hands on our legs so that we're supported here. And this protects our back.

Now that we're here, let's shake out our arms a little bit so we can relax through the shoulders. And let's let our heads hang. Maybe shake our heads gently to help relax our necks. This is a pose that we tend to feel a difference in from start of practice to end of practice.

Now let's bend our knees. Let's step our right foot back into Lunge. And then let's step all the way back into our Child's Pose. So we get to sit back towards our heels. Take a few breaths here in our Child's Pose.

Now let's walk our right hand over towards the center of our mat and maybe even bringing our hand over top-- right hand over top of our left. Once we find a place where we get a little bit of stretch but not too much, we can relax into our Child's Pose and take a few deep breaths here.

Now let's walk our hands through center, all the way to the right side of the mat. Left hand follows the right, maybe stacking on top of the right hand. And let's settle in for a few breaths in our Child's Pose to the right.

And let's walk our hands back to center. Up onto our quads, let's roll up until we are kneeling. And we're just going to lean off onto a hip so we can grab a seat.

Here we may want our block or our bolster again. Because it'll make this next couple of poses a lot more comfortable. We want to sit off the end of our block.

And we're going to start with a Seated Spinal Twist. So we'll sit up tall-- either both knees bent, or we can extend one leg. And then we'll twist towards the knee that is bent. When we twist, we'd like to reach through the top of our heads. And we want to be sure that we're not using our hand to pull ourselves into Twist.

Once we find the place where we feel a bit of a stretch, let's close one or both eyes. Start to lengthen our inhales and our exhales.

And let's inhale back into center. Let's switch legs-- sitting up tall, maybe extending the other leg, maybe not. And then we'll twist towards the knee that's bent. We'll twist in the other direction.

Make sure to roll our shoulders down and back. When we twist, our shoulders should be about level. So if we feel like one shoulder is creeping up, it usually tells us that we've twisted too far. We also want to use our core strength to lift us and twist us, rather than pulling us around. So you'll notice my hand is just relaxing on my leg, rather than moving me into a twist.

And let's untwist. Let's bring the soles of our feet together. The farther away from us, the more comfortable it will be to sit up tall in this pose-- Butterfly Pose. So bring your feet in as much as you need to so that you feel stable and it feels comfortable to sit tall. And then we'll apply just a little bit of pressure with our elbows to the insides of our legs to open our knees, feel a bit of stretch for our adaptors.

And again we can close her eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Inhales to sit up tall. And exhale to relax into our stretch.

And you can hold these poses at the end of your practice for as long as you want. It's usually recommended for about 10 to 12 breaths. And let's release.

So let's move off of our blankets if we're using them. And we get to move into our favorite part of our practice, which is our final relaxation or meditation. So we can roll back on to our mats.

And here, we've got some time just to do one more stretch. We're going to pick up our right foot. And we'll point and flex it a few times. And then let's flex our foot.

And we'll cross our right leg over our left. Let our right knee open away from us. And we can either relax right here in our Reclining Pigeon, or we can walk our left foot in. We might need to reach through and hold on to the back of our left leg.

We'd like to keep our tailbone on the floor. So if we notice that we're having to lift off a lot, then let's let our foot release back to the floor. And that's usually a more relaxing stretch anyway.

So in this stretch, we'd like to feel a little bit of flexibility work in and around our front leg glute. We want to make sure we're not feeling any strain or discomfort in our knee. Keeping our foot flexed helps to keep our knee in a safer place. And let's release our foot.

Bring the right foot down, pick up the left leg, and let's point and flex our foot a few times. Keep our foot flexed. And let's cross left leg over right. Open up our knee, and then walk our foot in, maybe picking up our foot or maybe not. And take a few deep breaths here.

All right, let's release our leg. Now let's find a place where we can lie comfortably for a few minutes. If you would prefer to sit, you're welcome to return to a seated position. And quite often, you see meditation recommended in the seated position. But a reclining position can be really relaxing. And so it's one that we can use when we'd like.

So for our final relaxation today, we're going to do a progressive muscle relaxation. That's actually going to start with us tightening up all of our muscles so that we can be aware of what tension feels like. And then we're going to relax all of our muscles at once. And we get to spend a few minutes relaxing so that we can feel what relaxation is like.

So if you'd like to practice with me, let's close our eyes. Your knees can be bent, or your legs can be straight. The next time we breathe in, let's curl our toes in towards our feet. And let's pull our feet towards our shins. So we'll feel tension in our toes, tension in our feet, and tension in our lower legs.

Breathing deeply, let's pull our knees towards our hips. So we feel the tension move up into our upper legs, both on the top and on the bottom. On our next inhale, let's tighten the muscles around our hips, squeezing our glutes, and feeling tension now from our hips all the way down into our toes.

The next time we breathe in, let's pull our bellybutton down toward the floor so our abdominals engage and our bellies feel hard. And we'll feel tension both in our abdominals and probably in our lower backs as well.

On our next breath in, let's curl our fingers into our hands to make fists. Let's reach our hands towards our feet. And then let's pull our shoulders up towards our ears. So we feel tension from our fingers, through lower and upper arms, into our shoulders. And as we breathe in, let's curl our shoulders in a bit so that we feel tension in our chest as well.

Now the next time we breathe in, let's move tension into our faces so that we press our lips together. We squeeze her eyes tightly shut, and we wrinkle up our foreheads. Let's take a few breaths here to notice what tension feels like. Let's notice what tension feels like in our muscles, in our joints-- but what tension feels like in our minds as well.

Now let's prepare to release all this. Let's take the biggest breath in that we can. And the next time we breathe out, let's let all that tension go. We'll relax into our exhale.

Let's take a few more deep breaths. Big breath in. Let's scan our body. And if we find an area of tension, let's relax that area as we exhale.

Now let's shift our attention to our feet. Let's wiggle our toes a few times. And let's let our toes and our feet relax.

The next time we exhale, let's release any tension that remains in our lower legs and on our upper legs. And breathing deeply, let's relax the muscles around our hips so that we might notice as we exhale, our feet may turn out to the sides. And legs and feet start to relax and sink into the floor.

Over the next two breaths, let's make our bellies as soft as we can with each exhale. Now let's wiggle our fingers. Let's reach them towards our feet. And let's turn our palms up toward the ceiling so that our hands-- backs of our hands can relax down toward the floor.

Shoulders can relax down towards our mat. And we'll feel our chest open. And feel like we're sinking into the mat from our shoulders all the way through your hips and down through our feet.

Now let's relax the muscles in our jaw. Let's soften the muscles around her eyes. Smooth out our foreheads. And on our next exhale, let's release any tension that we find remaining in our bodies.

Now let's notice what it feels like to be relaxed. Check from head to toe, muscles and joints. Return back to your head. Check to see what it feels like mentally when we're relaxed compared to what it feels like when we were intense. And just take a few breaths to enjoy having some time to do nothing but relax.

Now let's commit these feelings of relaxation to memory. Because we can practice this exercise when we're not practicing yoga as well. It's a nice one to use if we're having a hard time falling asleep. And the more often we practice it, the easier it gets, the more relaxed we will end up, and the longer those relaxation feelings will last.

So let's start to finish up our practice-- maybe wiggling fingers and toes, stretching if that feels good. And over the next few breaths, returning to a seated position if we want. Or we can stay relaxed for as long as we want.

This time, if there are questions, I'd be happy to answer questions. And if there's not, I'd encourage you to look at the handout that we have provided. There are some other mindfulness resources. And there are some ways that you can use mindfulness in your daily life from when you're doing chores to when you're working out.

And so I hope this is beneficial for you. And good luck with the rest of the semester.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: I've heard of many different types of yoga. Is there a style that I should look out for that is most well known to help for promoting relaxation and or mindfulness?

JOANNE GREEN: There are a lot of different styles of yoga. And generally, a restorative yoga might be really nice for promoting relaxation. Because its purpose is to help people to relax.

So it won't be as much physical work. Today's practice would be more rigorous than a restorative yoga would be. But it's a really nice way to relax.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Excellent. Our next question asks, what are your thoughts on bouncing a little when in a pose to improve flexibility?

JOANNE GREEN: Yeah. Generally, we recommend not to bounce in a pose. Because it might cause your muscles to tense up too quickly and cause a muscle tear or a strain. And so we'd like to ease into the pose gradually.

It also gives us the opportunity to pay attention to where we are in the pose, and see how far we really need to go. What we know about with yoga is that we're more likely to hurt ourselves at an in range of motion than we are if we don't go all the way to the farthest point that we comfortably can.

KAITLIN HENNESSY: Well, thank you so much for sharing your practice with us this evening. That's all the questions we have for now. And I hope everyone has a lovely rest of your weekend. Good luck on your final exams.

JOANNE GREEN: Thank you.