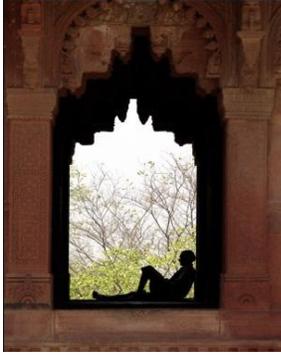




# Hatha Yoga

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*The Easy Way to Decrease Stress and Achieve Relaxation*



# What is Yoga?

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YOGA, at last is coming into its own in the Western world. After many years of being dismissed as something “bizarre” and attractive only to eccentrics, it is now recognized as a fundamental source of health and wellness for mind, body, and spirit.

The law of yoga is the Law of Life. Yoga embodies the secrets of successful living and combines age-old truths with a way of life that can be adopted into our modern lifestyles.

Yoga was evolved from the Veda, one of the most ancient scriptural books known to mankind--in which Indian saints and sages taught that the Universe is one and that all religions are paths ascending the same mountain towards Eternal Truth.

The ancients who formulated the art and practice of Yoga were way ahead of us. Thousands of years ago, the ancient Yogis recognized a person’s basic need to counteract physical and spiritual deterioration caused by the fight to survive. Although we are no longer “fighting to survive”, the stress and hurry that is prevalent in our day-to-day lives still trigger those same basic needs to find peace and balance.

Yoga is not a religion, nor is it a mystic cult. It is a way of life based on a Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism. The purpose of Yoga is to enable the reunion of one’s Spirit with God. It is a philosophy which integrates the individual life and the surrounding world to achieve harmony and equilibrium in the heart and mind of man, woman, and child.

One of the fundamental doctrines of Yoga is that God is within each one of us. However, He only reveals Himself in conditions of purity--both spiritually and physically. So, how do we connect with the Source through the practice of Yoga? The premise is that we have to function on a higher level both mentally and physically. The first step must be to rid the body of the impurities that cause disease and impede spiritual development. One can draw the analogy of a window which must be cleaned before one can see the light clearly through it.

This basic principle of purification underlines all Yogic practice and aims at establishing a balance in the body so that it functions, like a perfect vessel. When this state of physical balance is achieved the mind can then be quieted and one can realize the ultimate experience of pure thought and reason.

Yoga tries to address the three main facets of our lives which are mind, body and spirit. This is done through the Yogic philosophies of—asana (posture), pranayama (breath control), and meditation. These philosophies are then unified as one approach to the path of self-discovery.

So, how can Yoga help? Let us consider some of the problems that currently plague our society. Perhaps you are experiencing some of these challenges yourself.

- Overworked and tense feeling
- Difficulty relaxing--even in bed at night
- Overweight yet lack the will-power to diet

- Sometimes unable to cope with the dash and tumult of everyday life
- Irritable, worried, nervous
- Indigestion and other stress symptoms
- Seeking something, you know not what, which goes above and beyond the superficial level of everyday living?

Yoga awaits--your interest, your inspection, and your first hesitant experiments. It is here, it has always been here, it is yours for the taking. Those who have delved into its profound philosophy and studied for years with patience and devotion to learn more and more have found something unique, priceless, and indestructible. Yoga strengthens the mind, body, and spirit.

The inner power of Yoga becomes apparent when one realizes that it has something to offer every person in the here and now. Yet it is an ancient Hindu philosophy, with its beginnings shrouded in the mists of time. The idea may sound fanciful but the proof is real. Because of its ancient past, there can be a level of mysticism associated with Yoga. While it is true that some advanced Yogis are indeed possessed of powers and “magic”, they reached their state of heightened consciousness, not by bell, book, and candle, but by the disciplining the mind, which is the first step in perfecting the physical body, through Hatha Yoga.

Although I have a desire to gain oneness with our Source and would like to be able to live the philosophies of Yoga in its truest form, I also recognize that the ultimate experience of purity that Yoga teaches is not easily achievable in our busy lives. So how can we make Yoga work, when our daily lives demand our attention and action and often do not allow for much time for us to pursue our inner peace? We change our focus (even if only temporarily) and we make time. Yoga does not have to be chore or an intrusive part of our day. Make it a time that is welcome and anticipated. Make it a time that is special for you to reconnect and energize.

We live in a very hectic and fast moving world and I truly believe that the grounding and relaxing benefits that Yoga can provide is so important to our physical, mental, and spiritual health. While Yoga may seem intimidating to some, like me for instance, I have since learned that Yoga is not so mysterious and can be very practical and applicable in our daily lives.

Yoga is an expansive topic and books upon books can be written on the many aspects of Yoga. My goal is not so grandiose. In this report, my goal is to provide you a tool that will help you understand the mind, body, and spirit connection that Yoga teaches. And for practical matters, I also want to show you how you can reduce stress and reintroduce you to the concept of relaxation--through Yoga. This tool is Hatha Yoga.



# Hatha Yoga

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The body and the mind cannot be separated and the health of one affects the health of the other. This is the beauty of Hatha Yoga. You have the ability to focus and channel your efforts to induce relaxation, peace, and awareness by simply performing the practices of Hatha and you will feel its effects as a whole person—mind, body, and spirit.

Hatha Yoga is the preparation for all the higher forms of Yoga and because of its benefits to the body and the mind--it is the most popular form of Yoga to those of us who live in Western traditions.

Hatha Yoga can help with better health and calming of the mind so that you can find creative and clear solutions for all sorts of challenges. There are two very important points to consider. Firstly, the aim of Hatha Yoga is not for the acquisition of a superior muscular physique (like a body-builder), but rather the discipline and the purification of the body. Through discipline and purification, Hatha teaches that we forget our earthly shell enough to reach a state of heightened awareness through the control of the mind.

Secondly, Hatha Yoga is neither the easiest nor the fastest way to show physical results. Again, this practice is not about gaining bulky muscles. So, why Hatha Yoga for your health? Why not weight lifting, athletics, or even dancing? All of these will improve the circulation, the figure, and strengthen the muscles. What can Hatha Yoga offer? Simply that Hatha will provide an extraordinary control over the body and awaken the mind and spirit. Hatha can achieve your connection to your higher self, your divinity, and oneness with Source like no purely physical exercise system could possibly do.

Hatha Yoga is a static science. What does that mean? Basically one gets into a Yoga posture or asana and remains in that pose for as long as possible. Focus is placed upon the “wringing out” of certain organs, glands and muscles rather than on movement. When movement is necessary in Hatha Yoga it is always gentle and graceful. Anyone can benefit from Yoga regardless of age, sex, race, walk of life, or religious belief. It is universal. It can lead to more abundant living and a new awareness of higher realities by ridding the body of pains and diseases which drag the mind back into negativity; when in fact the mind and spirit wants to soar its way upwards towards the light and positivity.

It is reported that Lord Buddha, whose philosophy is based on the Veda from which Yoga was evolved, said that the first step on the way to spiritual freedom and salvation is perfect physical health. If you are drawn to Hatha Yoga do not be put off by others who might tell you that you will never reach a state of heightened consciousness by turning your body upside down or sitting in various leg-breaking postures. Instead, impress upon them this logic. Tell them that if the blood is impure, then the body, the mind, the nerves, and the spiritual life, cannot be cleared. Tell them that a person cannot control their mind until their body is made pure and healthy. And if by chance the naysayers do not buy into the mental and spiritual benefits of Yoga, the physical benefits of Yoga is undeniable.

You will find that Yoga knowledge, once accumulated, will begin to influence and help you in your daily life--from your attitude towards the people around you, to the way you sleep, breathe,

think, and even eat. Did I say eat? What has eating to do with Hatha Yoga? It is a strange fact that Yoga's doctrine of non-violence very soon inspires even the most enthusiastic carnivore to think about a vegetarian diet. As the senses become more acute through the practice of Yoga, one begins to experience distaste for all forms of killing and violence.

You may find that meat becomes unpalatable. Your senses gradually become awakened and you may start to think about things like energies. This new awareness can make you more sensitive to the energies of the world surrounding you, including the energies of animals. This sensitivity could impact your desire to eat meats as you begin to become aware of your connectedness to the world. Whether this happens to you or not I cannot predict, however, it is one of those side-effects that you should be aware of.

You see the practice of Hatha Yoga will inevitably affect your whole life for the better—whether you become a vegetarian or not. While Yoga is not a religion, nevertheless people who devote their whole lives to its practice become saintly and intensely spiritual. This applies to devotees of the other forms of Yoga as well. But, when I say devote, I mean this to be true and utter devotion. This type of spiritual ascension is typical of devotees who dedicate their entire life to the practice of Yogic living.

For those of us who look to Yoga as a supplement to our modern living, although significant benefits can still be attained with mind, body, and spirit; I am a little hesitant to say that we would ascend to a “saintly” stature. We become better, improved, and certainly more at peace. . .but, perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that we would be working our way towards saintliness ☺

Yoga can help you with your everyday challenges—whether those challenges are physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. As you grow healthier and more relaxed you become gentler, less inclined to fits of irritation and temper. Yoga is the counter-weight needed to the ever increasing nervous, mental and physical tensions of our modern life.



# Asana

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All the exercises or Asana of Hatha Yoga are based on the process of stretching, relaxing, deep breathing, and increasing the circulation of the blood and the powers of concentration. Yogic philosophies are divided into eight sections. These are:

- Yama—ethics
- Niyama—religious observances
- Asana—postures
- Pranayama—breathing exercises and control of the breath
- Pratyahara—withdrawing of the senses from external objects
- Dhyarana—concentration
- Dhyana—meditation
- Samadhi—super-consciousness

The simplest of the Asana and Pranayama are this report's primary focus because these are the beginnings of all Yoga. The introduction to Hatha Yoga that this report provides is meant to entice and empower the beginner Yoga seeker. Yoga can be intimidating so my purpose was to introduce easy Asana and Pranayama that everyone can master regardless of their age and level of physical fitness.

Once you have mastered or reached a level of comfort with the exercises described within this report, I encourage you to continue to expand your Yoga skills and knowledge. There are multitudes of resources available on-line and you will find it easy to research the information you need to expand your repertoire.

# Savasana

## Relaxation and Stretching

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No one, I think, would disagree with me when I say that the pace of modern life, especially in the big cities, is chaotic. Why oh why is everyone intent on doing something all the time? Why do we feel like we have to be busy all the time? Instead, I say, let's take a moment to unwind, to slow down, to quiet down, and to reflect. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to catch even a glimpse of the rich inner life of the spirit and the awesome power of clear thought?

Yoga will teach you to be more magnetic. It will show you the importance of knowing when to slow down. The ancient Chinese believed in the theory of 'masterly inactivity' and this served to lay down the foundation of a unique civilization. By 'inactivity' I do not mean idleness, laziness or mental inertia. Yoga's inactivity serves as a breathing space among the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Yoga serves as the space to allow you to recharge the batteries of your physical and mental processes. Yoga allows you to pursue life with renewed energy and clearer thought.

Yogis realized, centuries ago, that the mind always functions better in a state of relaxation. I agree with this. From a personal perspective, I don't make the best decisions when I am in a state of stress. When I force myself to work in this state, I often find myself with a headache, feeling weary, and lacking spontaneity and creativity.

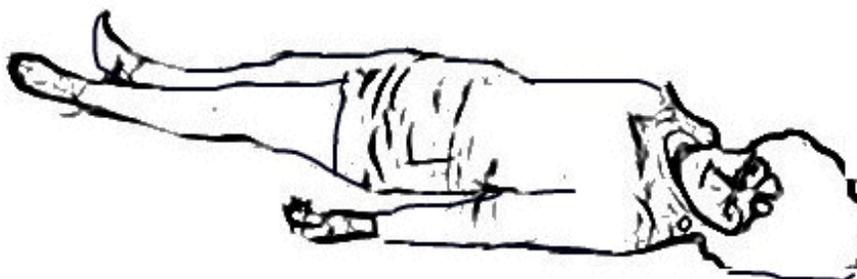
Yoga's first lesson is how to relax. Relaxation is important for our bodies. It allows our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies to repair and renew itself. Relaxation allows us to combat the damages we inflict on ourselves from living our fast paced, high stress lives.

There are many ways to relax and one person's form of relaxation may not be another's and this is totally ok. Everyone has their own way of unwinding. In this report, we'll take a look at one method of relaxation that can be achieved through Hatha Yoga.

Let's get started.

You ready? Lie down on the floor and let go. . . .let go, even of your thoughts.

That is all. And that is Yoga? It is indeed. It is called Savasana or the Corpse Posture. Not a very pleasant name I agree, but it is one of Yoga's most valuable and powerful techniques against ill health and stress. It is pictured in figure 1.



**Figure 1. Corpse Posture**

Try it.

Lie down on the floor like shown in the picture above. Relax and just let your arms rest where they may. Let your legs rest naturally on the ground. Let the feel of gravity nuzzle your body into security.

Close your eyes and let your head roll to one side. Keep your eyes closed and think of something peaceful, a lovely piece of music or the sound of the sea. Play soft, soothing music in the background if you like or open the window and listen to the birds. Let go of your mental chatter and feel yourself getting drowsy and relaxed. If your mind starts to chatter again, take notice, but tell your mind “shhhh. It’s time for quiet,” and then focus your attention back on the music, nature’s sounds, or your own breathing. Relax your entire body including your face. Release all the tension that you feel. Let it go. Allow the nurturing and stabilizing energies of Mother Earth secure you as you release all tension and stress. When you are ready, slowly roll to one side and push yourself to a sitting position. Take your time in getting up. There is no rush here.

Savasana is one of the greatest revitalizers in Hatha Yoga. Perform this simple posture whenever you are tired, angry, upset, stressed, or whenever you feel the need to reconnect with your Spirit. Let Yoga’s ‘masterly inactivity’ work for you.

Although Savasana seems simple in its outward appearance, what it can do for you mentally, emotionally, and spiritually can be very deep. As you progress with Savasana, its great influence will begin to work for you. As you get better with smoothing away the tensions in your body, you will find that the tensions in your mind will also be smooth away. You will be clearer and more creative with your thoughts. Problems which you may have perceived as overwhelming in the past will be reduced to more manageable “bumps in the road” that you can easily find solutions to.

Now that you have successfully completed the first lesson of relaxation, let us extend that topic to include stretching. Is this Yoga too? It is indeed and as vitally important as relaxation.

Let’s give it a try, but before we begin, I ask that you pay attention to how your body feels as you stretch. Stretching should feel good and energizing. If you feel any pain while stretching you may be pushing beyond what your body is currently capable of handling. **Do not stretch to the point of pain. Respect your capabilities and take your time.** If you are unsure, I recommend that you consult with your medical provider before attempting any of the stretches and/or postures described in this report.

Ready?

- Lie down as before on your back with your legs and feet together and raise your arms above your head with the fingers interlaced.
- Keep your fingers interlaced and slowly turn your palms upwards. Breathe.
- You will feel the increased stretch along your ribs and back. Breathe.
- Stretch your arms as far above your head as you can. Breathe. At the same time point your toes and push them forward so that you feel a stretching tension in legs, arms and shoulders. Breathe.
- Hold this stretch for as long as you can. Keep breathing, don't hold your breath. Your muscles need the nourishment of oxygen as you work them through stretching.

As we progress through this report, you will discover that part of Yoga's physical practice is about holding and releasing the muscles. Holding and releasing allows your muscles to work in a more gentle fashion. However, don't let its gentleness give you the wrong impression. Holding and releasing is very effective in strengthening and fatiguing your muscles.

Are you still holding that stretch 😊 Ok, now let go. Uncoil that stretch and let your body release the stretch all at once. Let your body relax back into the floor. Once more, you are in Savasana.

How do you feel? You should feel more relaxed, but energized at the same time. Try and find time to perform Savasana at least once a day. The benefits you will experience from this easy practice will be immense.



# Waking up to Yoga

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Wouldn't it be great to start the day refreshed? To leave your house knowing that you are balanced and assured in your wellness? With Yoga, you can.

Let's start with an easy stretching exercise.

## Leg Stretching Exercise

This is very simple.

- While lying in bed with your feet together push one of your legs down towards the bottom of the bed as though you were trying to lengthen it.
- Point your toes and you will feel a pull from your hips right down to your heel.
- Hold this position for one minute and then relax.
- After a moment's rest repeat the exercise with the other leg and then you are done with this exercise.

Easy huh? When you are finished get up very slowly out of bed and get ready for the Sun Exercise ☺

## Sun Exercise or Soorya Namaskar

The Sun Exercise is called such because it is traditionally practiced facing the sun as it rises, or practiced in the early morning hours. However, feel free to do the Sun Exercise any time of day.

Ready?

Let's give this a try. The Sun Exercise is made up of 12 poses that gracefully flow into one another.

1. Mountain Pose. Stand tall like a mountain, with your feet about hip width apart. You can either have your arms at your sides or in prayer form in front of your chest. Take several nice deep in and out breaths. When you are ready, flow into position 2.
2. Hands Up. Take a deep slow breath in as you raise your arms above your head. When your hands reach the top of your head, lace your fingers together and then bend backwards as far as you comfortably can. When you are ready, flow into position 3.
3. Head to Knees. Start to slowly exhale and begin bending forward slowly. If you can place your palms on the floor—that is great! If not, bend just enough to feel a stretch through your legs. Ready? Flow into position 4.

4. Lunge. Inhale again and place your chin to your chest. Now take a step back with your right foot and get in a lunge position. (Left leg is bent.) When you are ready, flow into position 5.
5. Plank. Exhale, and bring your left leg back so that it is parallel with your right leg. Hold this position for several in and out breaths. Ready? Flow into position 6.
6. Stick. At your next out breath, lower yourself to the floor like you were lowering yourself from a push-up. This is the hard part—leave some space between your body and the floor. Only your hands and feet should touch the floor. However, if you are unable to keep that space right now, don't worry. Do what feels best for you at this time. Let's flow into position 7.
7. Upward Dog. Inhale and stretch your upper body forward and up, bending at your waist. Use your arms to lift your torso off the floor. Only bend forward and up as far as it is comfortable. Slowly flow into position 8.
8. Downward Dog. Take an out breath and bring your hips up in the air. Position yourself so that you look like an inverted "V". To feel an increased stretch, flex your mid back towards your knees. Again only stretch to where it is comfortable. Ready for position 9?
9. Lunge. Inhale slowly and return to a lunge position. Right foot forward, left leg back. Almost done, when you are ready flow into position 10.
10. Head to Knees. At your next exhale, bring your left leg forward and rise slowly so that you are bending forward with your head to your knees. You're doing great! Almost there. Flow into position 11.
11. Hands Up. When you are ready, at your next inhale, slowly rise up to a standing position. Feel your backbone straighten and stack up on each other as you rise. When you reach your standing position, bring your arms up over head, lace your fingers together and slowly bend backwards to your comfort level. Finally, position 12.
12. Mountain. As you exhale, start to bring your arms down in a large sweeping motion. End the sweep by placing your hands in a prayer position.

Take your time with this. Breaking it down step by step makes the Sun Exercise seem complicated, but once you have the moves memorized, you will find this an easy exercise. You will be able to transition from one pose to another with grace and fluidity. Nothing should be hurried. As you advance in this exercise and your strength increases challenge yourself by trying to maintain each pose for as long as possible before you flow into the next pose. Remember holding and releasing? Hold each pose for a length of time, release and then flow into the next.



# Pranayama

## Releasing Stress with Breath and Breathing

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I am a firm believer that stress causes us to be sick. Whether the illness, manifests itself as a physical or mental ailment; stress is incredibly destructive to us. I have read that stress is the common cause for all diseases of the mind and body.

In the spirit of wellness; I wanted to take the time to talk about how Yoga can be used to relieve the negative effects that stress has on our bodies and our life in general.

Proper breathing is intrinsically linked with relaxation, with the emotions, and with the health of the body itself. Our thoughts are reflected in our breathing habits. Huh? What do I mean by this? Think for a second to a time when you were absorbed in a book or listening to soothing music. During those moments, your breathing processes were slow. However, when your mind is afflicted by anger, or sorrow, the breath becomes irregular and choppy and even constrained. When you are watching a movie in suspense, don't you find that you gasp and hold your breath? How about when you are bored? You open your mouth and yawn.

Ancient Yogis understood the importance of breath and breathing. Unfortunately, for us, we have lost the art of breathing and do not take the cleansing and energizing breaths we need throughout the day. For most people, they take short shallow breaths and often (because of stress) even hold their breaths.

We must learn how to breathe properly if we want to calm our mind and rid ourselves of our worries and frustrations in everyday life. The great thing is that because the mind and breath are interconnected, if you can control your breathing, you can control your mind. When you are at peace, your breath is slow and even. If the process, were reversed and we learn to breathe slowly and deeply--our mind will follow suit.

Ready for some breathing exercise?

### The Belly Breath

- Lie down flat on the floor. Get comfortable and when you are ready, place both your hands (palms down) on top of your belly and right below your rib cage.
- Take slow deep breaths through your nose. Inhale slowly. Exhale slowly.
- Feel how your breath fills your lungs and makes your belly rise with each in-breath.
- As you exhale, feel your diaphragm push out all the air. Feel your belly cave in to push out your breath.
- As you perform each in and out-breath, clear your mind and relax. Let your tensions go. Imagine your worries and your stress leaving your body with each complete exhale that you release.

Do this exercise for at least 5 minutes to experience the best results. This exercise will familiarize your body once more with the proper way to breathe, but the exercise will also calm your mind.

### Retention of the Breath

Retention of breath is simply holding the in-breath and out-breath longer than you normally would. At the end of every inhalation or exhalation there is a natural pause as the lungs fill or empty. These natural pauses we take when breathing is exaggerated in this exercise.

- Sit on the floor cross legged or on a chair with your back straight, but not stiff.
- Slowly inhale until your lungs feel full. Hold in your breath and do not release for a second or two.
- Slowly exhale and release all the air out of your lungs. When your lungs feel empty, hold your breath for a second or two.
- Repeat this cycle 3 times.

When first trying Retention of the Breath, please pay attention and obey your body's signal and breathe in and out when you feel the need to. As you advance, you can gradually extend these pauses for a second longer, and then another second, and then another. Do not force the pace. Yoga breathing is all about being slow and rhythmic. It's about enjoying and feeling the breath.

### Sun and Moon Breathing

To explain this strange name before you begin, the two aspects of Prana or life force which surrounds us are personified as Pingala and Ida—the positive and negative.

One of the aims of Yoga is to balance the opposite currents in our body, which then produces a state of perfect spiritual and mental equilibrium. The breath that enters the right nostril or Pingala is called the Sun Breath and the breath that enters the Ida or left nostril is the Moon Breath. The Sun and Moon breathing exercise consists of deep controlled breathing through each nostril in turn.

Sit down either cross-legged on the floor or on a hard chair with your spine erect, but not stiff, and your head level. Close your eyes and proceed as follows:

- Close your left nostril with your left thumb and breathe in, slowly and deeply, through the right nostril.
- Hold the breath for two seconds.
- Close the right nostril with the last two fingers of your left hand and exhale very slowly through the left nostril.
- A natural pause will follow and when the impulse to inhale appears, inhale through the left nostril, while the right nostril is still being held closed.
- Hold the breath for two seconds.

- Exhale slowly through the right nostril while the left nostril is held closed.

That finishes one cycle of Sun and Moon Breathing. Just like with the other breathing exercises, this exercise should also be performed slowly and to your comfort level. As you advance, the pauses, the in-breaths and out-breaths can be lengthened in duration.

## Nerve Recharging Breath

The Nerve Recharging Breath strengthens the nervous system and helps to overcome nervousness. It is also said to be helpful for improving self-confidence. Yoga is all encompassing!

Ready to feel charged?

- Stand up straight. Legs hip width apart and hands at your sides. Anchor yourself into Mother Earth.
- While inhaling deeply raise your arms forward to shoulder level with your palms upwards. Imagine yourself scooping up a ball of energy. Complete your inhalation.
- Close both your fists and, while holding your breath, pull your hands back slowly until your fists are resting against your shoulders. Bring that ball of energy towards you.
- When the impulse to exhale appears, do so, and at the same time slowly unclench your hands and lower them to the starting position.
- Repeat this exercise two or three times and then relax for a few moments before you perform any other exercise.

As you get familiar with the breathing exercises described in this section, you will find which exercise works best for you and your situation. Do not feel you have to perform all these exercises all at once. Pick and choose what applies. However, you decide to employ these exercises, you will be pleasantly surprised to find that in just a short time you will experience a new feeling of relaxation and freedom from stress. The additional benefit you might experience is that when you go to bed at night you will reclaim your sleep and sink into the most delicious sleep you've had (perhaps in a long time).



# Thank you

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I hope you enjoyed this report and have found it useful on your quest for information.

Yoga can provide you many benefits and I encourage you to implement the practice into your daily life. It will help you achieve wellness in all facets of your life.

I look forward to sharing more lessons with you through <http://iggylife.com>. Please visit often. If I have been of service to you in any way, please share the site with your family and friends so that we can extend our community of like-minded individuals.

Because I value your opinion, I would love to hear from you. Do you have any ideas for future blog topics, reports, or ways I can improve? Let me know!

If you have an inspiring, funny, or heart-warming story about you, a friend, family and/or stories about spirituality that you would like to share . . . I can post your story on my blog. People always need inspiration and if your story can make a difference for someone, I can help post your story.

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Or

[iggylife.com@gmail.com](mailto:iggylife.com@gmail.com)

Wishing you much bliss and wellness in your life. Till the next time. . .