

# Yoga to Ease a Tense Mind



**W**e all have helpful daily rituals such as taking a shower or brushing our teeth which make us feel brighter and ready for the day. This breathing sequence is a great addition; it cleanses the lungs and helps shift any tension caused by negative thoughts. It's also good preparation for a physical yoga practice or meditation session. Try it every day for a week. Try not to rush or hold your breath.

## Getting started

First, blow your nose to clear any blockages. Sit cross-legged with some padding under your bottom (try a rolled up towel or pillow). Or sit upright on a chair. Take three deep sighing breaths (in through the nose and out, 'ahhhh,' through the mouth).

## Nine cleansing breaths

As you practise this sequence, imagine each in-breath refreshing your body and mind, and each out breath clearing out any mental clutter.

- Breathe in through both nostrils. Notice the fresh, clean air entering your body.
- Press your right index finger into the right side of your nose and breathe out through the left nostril.
- Do three breaths like this. As the breath leaves the left nostril, feel it releasing any tension caused by anger, frustration or stress.
- Change sides: breathe in through both nostrils. Then use your left finger to close the left nostril and breathe out through the right nostril.
- Do three breaths like this. As the breath leaves the right nostril, feel it releasing any tension caused by greed, need or possessiveness.
- Now, rest your hands on your legs. Continue breathing in and out through both nostrils. Do three breaths like this, feel each out-breath releasing self doubt, anxiety and negative beliefs.

## Side bends and shake-outs

Complete the sequence using these seated stretches to squeeze and shake any stale air from body. Keep breathing in through both nostrils between each movement. If you are sitting cross legged change the cross of the legs to balance your sitting pose.

### Side bends

- Sit up, resting your hands on the thighs, breathe in then turn at the waist to face your right thigh.
- Breathe out, bend toward the right thigh. Imagine releasing any stale air from the bottom of the lungs (like squeezing a tube of toothpaste).
- Breathe in, return to the centre and face forward. Turn at the waist slightly to face your left thigh.
- Breathe out steadily, bending toward the left thigh, breathe in to return to centre.
- Repeat two more times on each side.

### Shake-outs

This can really clear the cobwebs. Imagine a dog shaking from tail to head when getting out of water, but take it slowly and don't shake your head!

- Stay seated with your hands on your legs and breathe in through both nostrils.
- Breathe out through the mouth with a soft 'haaa' sound and shake the body from side to side, from the base of the spine to the shoulders.
- As you shake and breathe out, 'haaa', lean forward towards your legs.
- Take a deep in-breath to come back to the original sitting position. Repeat three times.

End with three sighing breaths and then sit in stillness for a few minutes. Focus on noticing how you feel, without judging the feelings that show up. Right now, you have nowhere you need to be and nothing you need to make happen. Everything is just as it should be. Nothing has to be improved or changed.

You can stay here and sit in silent meditation, if you wish. It doesn't matter how you sit, so long as you are comfortable.



**“When you own your own  
breath, nobody can steal  
your peace.”**

Anon