



YOGA FOR ALL SEASONS

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YOGA AND MASSAGE THERAPY FOR ENHANCED HEALTH AND WELLNESS

TAKE A LOWER BACK BREAK

This exercise sequence increases the flexibility of the hip flexors and shoulder girdle. It builds a powerful foundation for the back by strengthening the glutes, lower back, and leg muscles. By activating most of the major muscles of the body, it also increases circulation and brings fresh, oxygenated blood to the torso, back, and legs, invigorating the whole body. It is useful to do in your office a couple of times a day, particularly when you've been sitting for a while.

1. Stand facing a chair, a bit more than an arm's length away. Slowly bend forward adjusting your distance to the chair, so you can put your outstretched hands on the back of the chair. Come to a half forward bend, where your spine is horizontal and parallel to the floor; your arms extended out in front of you, level with your hips, supporting yourself lightly on the back of the chair.
2. Bend slightly in your knees, still keeping your spine parallel to the ground. Hold 3-5 seconds, then straighten back up again. Repeat 3-4 times to warm up the leg muscles.
3. Keeping your hands on the chair, experiment with creating a bit more opening in the shoulders by lifting your sitz bones to the sky and pressing your torso ever so slightly towards the ground. Use intention, not force!
4. Still holding on to the chair, lift your right leg out behind you till it extends straight out behind, parallel to the ground. Hold the leg out for 20-30 seconds, then repeat on the other side. Repeat this exercise twice, attempting to hold each leg up longer the second time, as your muscle warm up.
5. Come into a low lunge with one knee on the floor (if the floor is hard, put something soft under it for support). Keep your spine upright, lift your neck and crown towards the ceiling. Supporting yourself on the seat of the chair, *slowly* lean into the lunge, stretching the hip flexors. Stay in the pose for 30-45 seconds, then repeat other side.

Stargazer

Bring your right leg back two to three feet, reaching a comfortable stance with your hips squared to the front, your left foot pointing forward, and your right foot at a 45 degree angle or pointing forward as much as possible. Clasp your elbows behind your back, resting your arms on your lower back.

Grounding into your feet, lift out of your waist, grow your spine long, and slowly come into a slight backward bend lifting your sternum slightly toward the ceiling. Tuck your chin and you're your neck long, allowing your gaze to rest easily on the ceiling or top of the wall. Keep lengthening through the spine, breathing deeply, finding the stillness in the pose, while continue to grow the pose. Stay for 5-8 breaths, then repeat other side.