

A Yin Yoga Sequence

Simhasana – 5 rounds, seated

Sit in virasana or another comfortable posture with an erect spine. Close the eyes, place the hands to rest palms down over the knees, and inhale deeply. With the exhalation, open the jaws as wide as possible, roaring with the exhalation, and with the tongue extended out. The exhalation should be as long as possible, then gently close the jaws, and take two gentle breaths. Repeat this four more times, then moving on to the next posture.

Meditation Seat – Watch Breath – 2 minutes

Begin by grounding yourself in sukhasana with an erect spine. Close your eyes and take a moment to reflect on the happenings of this crazy and stressful year, cultivating a sense of gratitude for your body in this moment. Begin to watch the breath without asking the breath to change, and start to settle your mind before moving to the first pose.

Butterfly Pose - 2 minutes

From sukhasana, extend the legs forward, then draw your feet together, allowing your knees to release laterally and toward the floor. As you begin to release the spine forward, close your eyes and allow yourself to be led by sensation instead of what the shape looks like. Allow the upper body to release forward without pulling or pushing. Once you've found a comfortable place to land, support the forward bend by resting forearms on the inner calves. To come out of Butterfly, slowly extend your spine back to upright and extend your legs. Move slowly and carefully as the sensations intensify in the legs and lower back.

Melting Heart - 2 minutes

From a table position, come on to your forearms and soften your heart between your shoulders, while keeping your hips stacked above your knees. The arms can be extended forward or you can bend your elbows and take your palms together in prayer or reach them backward your shoulder blades.

This shape can be intense for the shoulders so please be mindful of your edge and adjust your arm position as needed. See if you can relax for the next few minutes. When you are ready to release the shape, lie flat on your belly, extending your arms and legs back and turn your head to one side.

Open Wing – 2minutes each side

Lying on your stomach, take your right arm out to the side—90 degrees or less from your torso with your palm facing down. Then, press your left hand into the floor to roll onto the right side of your body. You're looking for sensation across the right side of your chest, shoulder, and right arm. Try bending your knees and possibly opening your left leg up toward the ceiling by standing your left foot on the floor. This last action can increase sensation in your right arm, but if it's too much, leave your left knee and leg down. Hold for 2 minutes on this side before releasing back onto the belly and taking the other side for two additional minutes. Then release onto the belly, with forehead resting on stacked hands. Take several breaths here and then move to the next pose.

Seal/Sphinx Pose - 2 minutes

From your belly, prop yourself up onto your forearms to open your chest. Stay for a few breaths before going any deeper. If it feels appropriate for you, press into your hands and straighten your arms. You can bow your head forward or alternatively keep the head upright so that your neck remains in line with the rest of the spine. Close your eyes and stay for two minutes, releasing back onto the forearms if the sensation is too

intense. To come out, slowly release to your forearms then take your elbows wide, resting your forehead on to stacked hands. Hold a neutral spine for a few breathes before pressing back to Child's Pose.

Child's Pose with Arm Variation - 4-5 breaths

Bring your knees together and draw your hips back toward your heels, rounding the spine forward and relaxing the shoulders. Soften your entire body here and breathe into the back of your lungs. Consider either reaching your arms forward or bending one arm at a time and placing your hand to the opposite elbow. Find stillness for the next several breaths, making any adjustments you need to be comfortable. When you are ready, begin your transition back to a seated position.

Lateral Dragonfly Pose - 2 minutes/side

Extend your legs wide apart, ground both sitting bones and lengthen your spine. Begin to turn your chest toward the right leg and walk your hands out, any amount, as you round the spine toward your right thigh. Only go as far as your first point of tension and use this as an opportunity to practice patience. Stay for 2 minutes, and slowly make your way back up to center, then repeat on the left side.

NOTE: If you suffer from a recent groin or hamstring injury, please opt out of practicing this posture. While you will feel sensations during yin yoga, going beyond your edge will irritate your injury and could set you back.

Caterpillar – 2 minutes

From a seated position with your legs straight in front of you, fold forward, allowing your spine to gently round. Consider sitting up on a folded blanket or two and resting your head and arms on a bolster or cushion. Relax your legs and spine; it's OK if your legs externally rotate a little when you do this.

Banana Pose - 2minutes each side

Next, return to your back, reaching your arms and legs over to the right corners of your mat. Adjust your head and shoulders but be mindful to keep the hip stationary and parallel to the floor to create maximum space on the left side, in the shape of a crescent moon (or banana). Send your breath into your left waist. Allow the weight of the body to settle for the next few minutes. Make your way back to neutral between sides and repeat.

Twisted Root – 2 minutes each side

Stay on your back and bend your knees, keeping your feet on the floor. Cross your right knee over your left. Then, lift and shift your hips a little to the right. Roll over to your left side in a modified fetal position, then slowly take your right arm out to the right side, allowing your upper right shoulder to rest toward the ground. If this is challenging, initially keep your right hand on your right waist, then gradually reach it out to the side to deepen the twist. Hold 2 minutes, then repeat on the other side.

Legs-to-Chest Transition – 4-6 breaths

Before moving to Savasana, draw your knees to your chest and gently rock from side to side. Stay here as long as you need before making your way to savasana.

Savasana - 10 minutes

To end, lay back and surrender fully. Finish your practice with a sense of fullness, allowing this practice to sustain you.