

## *OM-MY!*

### Simple Stress Reduction Asanas

It seems as though stress has become an everyday part of the human condition. We rush through the day; push ourselves to extremes . . . we have even learned to take our 'relaxation' to the max! The good news is that negative stress doesn't need to stay with us. There are ways to cope with and rid ourselves of the knots in the neck, headaches, tight shoulders, and poor breathing that is so often an outcome of the stresses we experience. Below are some simple, chair-based modified yoga asanas (poses) that can be practiced by just about anyone - and almost anywhere. And they take just a few minutes to do!

Practice each of the following modified asanas PRN:

- ☪ Sit forward in your chair with a lifted, lengthened spine. (If you're at a desk, make sure to push back several feet so there are no obstructions directly in front of you.) Rest your hands on your knees. Inhale to lengthen up; exhale and fold your upper body forward, sliding hands over the knees and down the shins, and bringing belly and chest to rest on the thighs. Keep the breath slow and relaxed, stay in this forward fold for six to ten breaths, then inhale and slowly lift up to sitting. Repeat two or three times.
- ☪ Sit tall in your chair with a lifted, lengthened spine; descend the inner shoulder blades along either side of the spine. Close your eyes. Turn your head side to side in a rhythmic way while completing an inhalation/exhalation at each side. Remember to maintain the lift and length of the spine, even through your exhalations. Three to four turns to each side.
- ☪ Relax the lower jaw by letting it drop away from the upper jaw by at least one-half inch. At the same time, concentrate on relaxing the lower jaw, the soft palate, the throat and the root of the tongue. Rotate the lower jaw clockwise, then counterclockwise in rhythm with the breath. Three rotations in each direction.
- ☪ Open the mouth wide and extend your tongue down toward your chin. Feel the downward stretch of your facial muscles over the facial bones. Move your gaze upward while keeping it unfocused; ROAR and release any tension! Yes, ROAR out loud! You'll be breathing better if you do and it may make you laugh - another guaranteed stress-reliever. Practice this twice, more if you feel the need for additional laughter.
- ☪ Spread fingers apart and stretch the skin of the palms taut; place the finger tips lightly on the edge of your desk or work area. Inhale and arch your back; look up without over-straining the neck. Exhale while tucking your chin and softly rounding your back. Repeat the arching and rounding four to six times.
- ☪ Stretch your arms out to the side or slightly upward. Open your hands and fingers fully and lean into the back of your chair. Bend backward as far as feels comfortable; lift your chin. Open the throat and stretch across the chest. Come back to the starting position. Complete four times.
- ☪ Sit facing forward your chair. Inhale to lift and lengthen your spine. Exhale and twist toward the back of the chair with your upper body (while maintaining the length of the spine); reach your legs in the other direction toward the opposite side of your chair. Take a few breaths while drinking in the feel of the twist, then relax, release back to sitting forward in your chair and take the other side.
- ☪ Place your hands on your shoulders; bend the elbows out to the side. Twist back and forth from the waist in time with your breath. Move slowly, staying in rhythm with the breath. Twist to each side three times, then relax arms down and let hands rest in your lap.
- ☪ Sit forward in your chair (or in simple kneeling or cross-legged position on the floor); bring your awareness to your breath. Mentally repeat any or all of the following affirmations as you inhale, then exhale completely:
  - All is well
  - I can handle it
  - I am calm and relaxed.

Namaste! Your body and your stress level thank you for doing yoga today. OM Shanti, Deborah