

Emotions and Yoga Poses

Courage

Yoga Pose: Cobra

Lie on your belly and bring your hands under your shoulders. Palms are on the floor with fingertips reaching underneath the top of your shoulders. Using back strength, gently raise your head and shoulders, feeling the heart lifting up and forward. You can also push the hands gently into the floor to raise a little higher but continue to use your back strength as your focus. Hold for three breaths, lower down to rest. Repeat as often as you like.

The cobra requires us to have the strength of courage to rise from the ground, able to protect ourselves, and face the fears before us. As you practice, visualize and feel the strength of courage.



Assertiveness/Vision

Yoga Posture: Tree Pose

From standing, shift all of your weight to your left foot. Turn the right foot to point to your right side with the heel on your left ankle. If this is enough, remain balancing as much weight as you can on your left leg. If you are stable, there is an option to slide the right foot up the left leg to the calf. You may then also bring your hands together to prayer posture in front of your heart. If you are steady, you can also “grow branches” reaching your hands straight to the sky. Continue for three breaths before slowly lowering back down to standing and practicing on the right leg.

The Tree pose is a practice of assertiveness. We begin by planting our foot firmly rooting into the ground. We feel the stability of our base before eventually growing branches, reaching for the sun, identifying our goal in life, and having the strength to reach for it. Trees sway. There is a gentle flexibility in trees, so they are neither passive nor aggressive, but hold a stable assertive balance. As you practice, feel the strength of reaching for your goals and maintaining balance in life.



Joy

Yoga Posture: Dancer

From standing, shift all of your weight to your left foot. Bending your right knee raise the foot up behind you. If you are comfortable, reach your right hand back to hold the foot. The left hand reaches up toward the ceiling. The heart lifts up and slightly forward, creating a slight curve in the back. If this is enough, remain there. If you are comfortable with more, begin to kick the foot backward while the heart leads, leaning forward. Continue for three breaths before slowly lowering down and practicing on the right leg.

Dancer pose is a practice of lighthearted joy. We begin by planting our foot firmly rooted into the ground. We feel the stability of our balance ease as we stretch forward and back. The dancer is a practice of opening the heart to play. There is a flexibility of the dancer that opens us up. While we may not be able to hold the balance as long, there is a feeling of accomplishment of the achieved beauty, which is magnified by its impermanence. As you practice, feel the lightness of being, the freedom to dance.



Stability/Compassion

Yoga Posture: Mountain Pose

From standing, keep your arms at your side. You may turn the palms to face slightly forward, helping the shoulders to broaden open. Be here now. Be aware of major muscle groups. Pressing the feet into the ground can engage the calves. A gentle tense in the upper thigh will adjust the hip. We can lift tall out of our waist, expanding our abdomen. Lifting tall will encourage the heart to lift and open, spreading the chest and shoulders broad. The top of the head lifts slightly by slightly pulling in our chin, elongating the back of the neck. Breathe here for several breaths.

Mountain pose is a practice of stability and compassion. Mountains stand tall and strong. As storms pass through life, mountains will not be moved. The mountain may provide shelter to others; it also causes water to run away and collect into a place where animals can get a drink. The nourishment of the Earth provides food, sharing without fear of scarcity. The strength of the mountain is not how it imposes its will on others but that it stays stable and reliable. Mother Earth is always there beneath our feet, supporting us. As you practice, feel the strength of stability and compassion running through you.



Letting Go

Yoga Posture: Knee-Down Twist

Lie down on your back. Bending your right knee into your chest, clasp the knee with both hands, giving it a gentle hug. Release the right hand and reach it along the floor to your right side. The left hand guides the knee to the left as far as comfortable. Your right hip may rise off the floor but keep both shoulders flat on the floor. Continue for three breaths before slowly unwinding and practicing on the other leg.

Knee-down twist is a practice of drawing inward to the preciousness of our core. Opposite of the tree that actively reaches open, knee down twist is like the autumn, letting go of the foliage, to remember our core self. As we relax into the pose, all the muscles in the body stretch away from our core, wringing out any unnecessary tensions that we carry. As you practice, feel the strength of reaching for your goals and maintaining balance in life.

