



The Healing Collective

POSES AND MOVEMENTS



FOR CALMING

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Poses and Movement for Calming

Symptoms Addressed

- Emotional awareness and regulation
- Concentration and attention
- Dysregulated interoception
- Memory
- Stress response
- DSM-5 PTSD arousal and reactivity symptoms



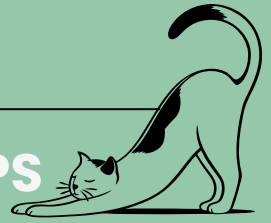
Calming poses and movements, which often involve stretching, help clients de-stress and relax. These techniques can be used alone, to promote mindful relaxation, or in conjunction with other bottom-up or top-down practices, to train the body to relax while experiencing distressing thoughts or to intensify the effects of other stress-reducing practices (such as mindful breathing). Each of the poses and accompanying movements presented here may be practiced with clients in the context of psychotherapy, but they require more space and sense of safety with the therapist than grounding poses and movements.



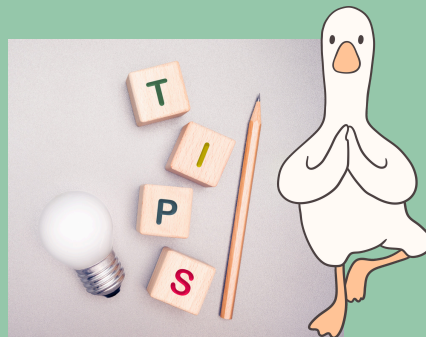


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POSES AND MOVEMENT FOR CALMING TIPS



- To introduce calming poses and movements to clients, discuss the poses and show the client a picture of the pose(s) you propose they try. If possible, also consider doing these along with the client, to demonstrate for them the proper form. This will help ensure that the client feels confident and safe about attempting these poses both in and out the context of therapy.
- Before practicing calming poses and movements, ensure that the client has completed a recent physical with their physician and that the physician does not believe these practices are contraindicated for the client.
- During these exercises, attention may simultaneously be brought to the breath, focusing on long, slow, steady inhales and exhales.
- It is also recommended to have clients imagine that they are breathing into the poses and movements as they engage in them.
- If appropriate, these techniques can also be utilized with top-down, cognitive techniques, including trauma-focused approaches. For instance, while in a calming pose, clients may be asked to access information regarding a traumatic memory. As they do this, they remain in the pose, and continue to focus on feeling into a specific area as they discuss some aspect about the memory.
- After practicing these poses, follow up with the client about their experience and discuss when, and for how long, they will practice these poses outside of session. A short daily practice of approximately five minutes is a common recommendation.





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CHILD'S POSE



This beginner's yoga pose helps individuals reduce stress and induce relaxation. To enter child's pose, begin by gently lowering onto the ground, onto your hands and knees. While on your hands and knees, bring your feet together behind you so that your big toes touch. Begin to lean back, putting your weight on your heels, feeling the front of your feet pushing into the ground. As you lean back a bit, ensure that your knees are approximately hip distance apart, keeping your feet together under your weight.

Next, sit upright, spine straight, and take a deep breath in and out. Now, begin to lean forward, extending your arms to the ground and moving them outward, away from the body, stretching as far out in front of you as possible. Keep the lower part of your body in the same position as it was when you were seated upright; push your sit bones into your heels as you simultaneously extend your arms out as far as you can, beginning to feel the lower (and perhaps the upper) parts of your arms touching the floor.

If you find it difficult or uncomfortable to keep your sit bones pressed into your heels, you may place a blanket or pillow in the fold of your knees, providing you with extra support. Gently allow your head to drop down, lowering your forehead to the ground. Press your palms gently into the floor as you continue to press your sit bones into your feet (see figure below).



Begin to breathe deeply into this position and, as you breathe, focus on continuing to press your sit bones and palms downward. Stay here for a few moments, continuing to take long, deep breaths, emphasizing long, deep exhales.

Incorporate Movement

To incorporate movement into child's pose, gently begin to transition from child's pose to upward dog pose, using the instructions in the following Upward Facing Dog Pose Handout. You may enter upward dog pose, remain there for a few moments, and then slowly transition back to child's pose, alternating between the two poses a few times.



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UPWARD FACING DOG POSE



This beginner's yoga pose helps individuals open the chest and reduce tension. To enter upward facing dog pose, begin by gently lowering your entire body onto the ground, stomach down. Lift your head slightly, bend your elbows, and position your hands firmly on the floor between your chest and shoulders. As you do this, ensure that your elbows and arms remain close to the sides of your body, as opposed to allowing them to flare out away from your body. With your hands pressed into the floor, begin to push through your palms, lifting your head and chest off the floor upward as you slowly straighten your arms. There is no requirement to completely straighten your arms; rather, focus on opening the chest, stretching the back, and lifting the head and chest up toward the sky.

As you continue to lift the head and chest, palms pushing into the floor, set your intention to gently shift your hips forward and, if possible, push upward a bit more with your palms, beginning to lift your hips off the floor while keeping your legs straight. Hold this position and take a deep breath, directing your gaze upward.



Begin to breathe deeply into this position and as you breathe, focus on continuing to press upward through the palms. Stay here for a few moments, continuing to take long, deep breaths, emphasizing long, deep exhales.

Incorporate Movement

To incorporate movement into upward facing dog pose, gently begin to transition from this pose back into child's pose, holding each pose for several breaths before transitioning between the poses.



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CAT/COW POSE



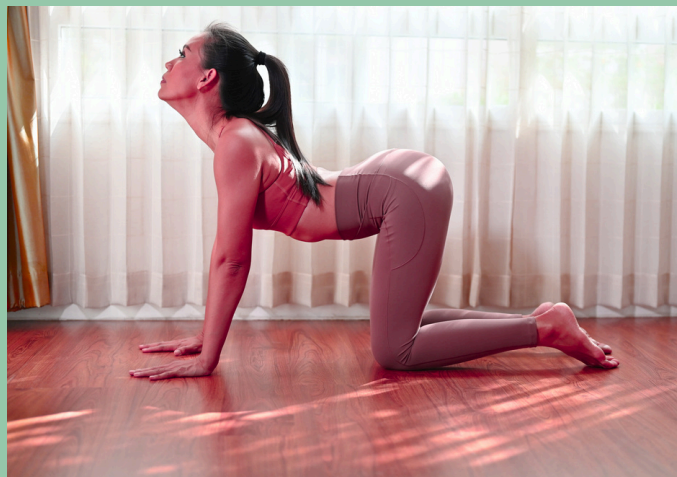
These yoga poses produce a calming response by lengthening the spine and relaxing the back, a place where the body commonly holds tension. Additionally, this exercise promotes circulation between back discs, which in turn releases tension from the back and improves flexibility.

Before entering cow pose, lower onto the floor, assuming a "tabletop position" with your palms on the floor, arms straight, and knees, lower legs, and tops of feet on the floor. As much as possible, equally distribute your weight between your hands, knees, lower legs, and feet. Gently engage the core muscles so that the center of your body, the abdomen, is not saggy. Additionally, ensure that the shoulders are directly over the wrists, and the hips are directly over the knees as you hold this position for a moment. From this position, you may enter cow pose or cat pose, and begin to alternate between the two, incorporating movement.

ENTER COW POSE

To enter cow pose, begin to inhale, while allowing your stomach to drop downward as you release the tension in your core muscles. As you do this, also lift your head, gaze, and chest upward, and imagine that you are simultaneously lifting your tailbone upward (figure below).

Begin to breathe deeply into this position and, as you breathe, focus on continuing to extend your head, chest, and tailbone up into the sky. Stay here for a few moments, continuing to take long, deep breaths, emphasizing long, deep exhales.





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Enter Cat Pose



To enter cat pose from cow pose, take one more inhale while in cow pose, and as you start to exhale, begin to engage your core muscles, pulling your abdomen upward. Pass through the neutral position you assumed at the beginning of this practice, continuing to pull your core muscles upward, rounding your spine and tucking your tailbone under. At the same time, lower your head and gaze downward, allowing your chin to make contact with your chest. Now, with your spine still curved, breathe in this position for a moment, continuing to take long, deep breaths out.

I N
E X H A L E



Incorporate Movement

To incorporate movement, flow between cow pose and cat pose with each breath, moving into cow pose on each inhale, and transitioning into cat pose with each exhale. Continue this movement for several breaths.