

5-MINUTE STRESS REDUCTION EXERCISE

The 5-minute Yoga Stress Reduction Practice

This quick 5-minute practice is one that you can either guide your client's through using the script below during a session or you can provide them with the handout of this practice so that they can practice it on their own, or both!

The 5-minute practice is a wonderful way to help your client's ground and come into their body at the start of a session. It is also a wonderful daily practice that they can incorporate into their personal somatic practices.

Dr. Rachel Dew,
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Script:

We're going to do a very brief practice of just de-stressing, letting go of the day and so we're just going to bring ourselves into our center. You can either do this seated in a chair or on the floor on a yoga mat or towel.

Go ahead and sit on the seat bones cross-legged on the ground or in your chair, and instead of collapsing down like we do at the car or the computer all day, we're really going to inhale that chest up, which draws in the core, supports the spine, and press off of your seat bone.

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You should feel your bottom pressing into the mat or chair and just keep stretching up as if something is pulling a string up through the top of your head. Inhale up, allow the eyes to drift shut and see if you can bring your head to stack directly over the shoulders or the clavicle instead of back or forward. Really just bringing it center. Take a few deep relaxed breaths here, inhaling through the nose, drawing the breath deep down into the chest, into the belly, and track that breath or follow it back up and out as you exhale through the nose as well. Let's do a few more cycles of breath.

Just notice where your mind is going. Notice the flavor or color of your thoughts. One more deep inhale here through the nose and then open the mouth. Release the air in a haaaaaaaa sound. Letting go of the tension of the day. One more deep inhale through the nose. Really fill that chest, fill the belly. Exhale. Open mouth. Haaaaaaaa. Beautiful.

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Keep raising from the chest drawing the torso up nice and tall. Allow the eyes to flutter open. Deep inhale, exhale, bringing the chin to the chest, allowing gravity to take hold and to gently open up the back of your neck and shoulders. Place your hands on your knees.

Remember, don't collapse. Keep raising from the chest and keep the spine straight. And just release here. Letting go of any expectation you have for yourself. Just allowing, being present in the moment and releasing is your practice. If you notice any negative thoughts or feelings or just tension coming up, really exhale it out, release it with that haaaaaaaaa sound. See if you can release your chin, your chest, just a little bit more. Notice how that feels different in the body.

On your next exhale, roll the head up gently. Bringing it back center and inhale, then draw that chest up again nice and tall. Next, we're going to release the right arm down. You can plant your hand on the floor or if you are in a chair on the arm of the chair, or you can just have your fingertips supporting you, but you don't want to be leaning or collapsing. So keep that chest inhaled up and just drop the hand to support or act as a lever pressing off the ground or chair.

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Now, if your arms are shorter you might need to come up on your fingertips in order to keep your shoulders up and square. On an inhale, raising the left arm up. Exhale, release it up and over the body to the right and just letting the weight of the arm gently release or draw the head down into the left. You don't want to be pulling or going fast beyond the normal release here of gravity. Just let it just fall open. You should feel a stretching or an opening all in your neck, into your shoulder and the entire side body. Just breathe into it. When I say breathing into it, I mean inhale your breath, track the inhale into the chest, track it back out, and see if you can actually feel an expansion in the whole side body region. As you inhale, bringing the breath into it, oxygenating, then exhale, releasing tension.

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And releasing your hand back up and over and down, and just gently guiding head up and center. Take a moment to straighten and extend the torso long and tall. Then, releasing that left arm down and take a moment to center yourself again. And again, not leaning or collapsing, just inhaling, keeping that spine nice and straight. Core is in and supporting the spine. Left hand, come on fingertips or palm. Inhale the right arm up. Exhale, release the right arm up and across to the left, up and across the head, and just allow the weight of that right arm to open up that neck area gently does, your head just comes gently down to the right. Again, just letting it open on its own, not forcing it, just allowing it to release.

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Take a few more breaths here. Again, tracking the breath, really breathing into the side body. So breathe in the air, feel it fill your chest and expand into your shoulder into the neck. Exhale, up and out through the nose. A few more breaths. Not pulling or straining, just letting the weight of this right arm guide and open. Now, letting the right-hand glide back up and across and down, bringing the head back up and center, releasing that right arm down.

Gently move up and around coming to hands and knees, or if you are seated in a chair bringing the hands to the knees. If you are on your hands and knees, the knees should be hips distance apart and the palms should be planted on the ground directly under each shoulder and the spine should be flat. You don't want your arms to be wide out at the edge of the mat. You want them stacked so the wrist is stacked directly underneath of the shoulder. Stacking the bones is really important so that we're building strength and balance in the joints.

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If this hurts your knees, feel free to roll your mat up and under so that you're giving your knees a little bit more cushioning. But make sure if you're doing that, that you're giving yourself enough space with the cushioning so that your knees can be a hips distance apart, not wider. You can also roll up a towel or a blanket and lay that across to give yourself even more support. Take care of yourself, listen to your body. Remember that the spine is not collapsing down or arching, it is nice and flat. You're pressing out from the palms of your hands. Spine is nice and flat. Toes or laces down.

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You're going to inhale an exhale, pressing back, pressing the hips back into a child's pose, bringing your butt to sit back on the heels and extending the arms forward and resting the forehead on the ground. Or if you are in a chair, gently forward fold. Take a deep inhale and exhale again through the mouth... haaaaaa. Take a few breaths to just melt into your pose staying there. Listen to your body. Make any adjustments you need to feel more comfortable. If you are on the floor in child's pose it might feel better if you bring the knees wider and angle the toes towards each other. It might feel better if you are stretching further forward and pressing the hips back more. Or it might feel better with your arms bent and your hands closer to your shoulders. Just taking a few moments here, just breathe. Resting in your child's pose, this is honoring balance and releasing tension... just be with the breath for 4-6 more full breath cycles. Slowly and gently come back up to a seated position.

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