

Earth Relaxation

It is important that we minimise the source of any stimulation which, by nature, will increase the activity in our brains. As we change the focus of our mind in this relaxation move your thoughts gently and slowly to mirror the gentle and slow breathing rhythm. Move slowly and fluidly into your relaxation position. There is no right or wrong in this practice, if your thoughts wander, if you cough or sneeze accept it without guilt and re-focus where you left off.

If your back is tense and twitchy then use a blanket beneath the knees or keep the knees bent. Ensure you are warm and comfortable. Adjust your clothing so that it drapes your body comfortably. Gently stretch out long – do a soft lift of the hips and ripple the back onto your mat. Let the feet fall outwards to a comfortable angle. Lay your arms slightly away from your body, your hands relaxed palms facing upwards and fingers gently curved. Pad beneath the head and any other areas that may generate pressure or tension. Slowly move your head from side to side and return to a neutral position. Tuck the chin in or raise your head and lay your neck down long. Close your eyes or gaze into the distance with unfocused eyes.

Settling into your practice

Leave the outside world behind, let any noise around you fade into the distance, begin to focus internally on your being. Bring your thoughts inside; in this introspection do not try and change any aspect at this time – simply accept it as it is – this is you, now. Let your mind's eye flow softly through your body, sweeping in slow and graceful motion through you. Notice your breathing, does it feel normal, laboured, shallow or... Notice your body, does it feel normal, tense, hot... Notice your feelings, are they normal, mixed, excited or... Now allow yourself the pleasure of this relaxation. Give yourself the permission to relax, this is your time to let go of stress, of tension, and the needs of those around you. Let the world and day to day existence fade into a distant corner of your mind – not forgotten but of no consequence in this time and space.

You are part of this world, part of the earth – focus your thoughts on where you touch this earth. Feel the earth, feel the contact and be thankful for the opportunity to experience it. Notice where you contact the earth; the heels, the calf, the upper thigh, the buttocks, the back, the shoulders, the arms, the back of the hands, the head. Notice where you do not connect with this earth; the back of the ankle, the back of the knee, the small of your back, your neck. Now feel your body begin to soften, begin to relax and flow onto your mat, melt to the shape of the earth. Feel yourself part of the earth in a wonderfully warm and safe place. Visualise your mat as being set in your favourite place, a place you love to be - possibly from childhood or a holiday or simply being in your yoga practice. This is your place, your safe place, warm and comforting and relaxing.

Bring your thoughts to your breath, a gentle, slow rhythmic breath through your nose. Feel the cool in-breath and the warm out-breath in your nose and on your upper lip. Imagine the breath of life entering your nostrils and follow it up into your head where it swirls round and then breathing out follow it down and out through your nostrils. This is a gentle breath that flows in and collects all the negative thoughts and impulses and pulls them out into the world to be released - to be forgotten. Let the breath help you let go of the day's tension and clean out the fog of your mind. Let the cool breath remove the heat and uncertainty within your mind. Let the breath clear your mind and release your body.

Allow your thoughts to drift down into your left leg and into your foot; become aware of your toes and spaces between them. Trace the outline of the foot in your mind's eye, see the sole and the graceful arch, feel the heel in contact with the earth, feel your foot soften and relax.

Allow your thoughts to move to your lower leg, see the shape of your calf, feel the earth beneath your calf, sense the melting of your calf into the earth, feel the joy of letting go and relaxing. Allow your thoughts to rise to your thigh, aware of the strength in your thigh, feel the reassurance of strength in your body feel your power touch the earth and melt into the earth, feel your thigh relax and let go.

Allow your thoughts to drift down your right leg and into your foot; become aware of your toes and spaces between them. Trace the outline of the foot in your mind's eye, see the soul and graceful arch, feel the heel in contact with the earth, feel your foot soften and relax.

Allow your thoughts to move to your lower leg, see the shape of your calf, feel the earth beneath your calf, sense the melting of your calf into the earth, feel the joy of letting go and relaxing.

Allow your thoughts to rise to your thigh, aware of the strength in your thigh, feel the reassurance of strength in your body feel your power touch the earth and melt into the earth, feel your thigh relax and let go.

Allow your thoughts to move slowly and gently to your right arm. Feel the arms contact with the earth, feel the arm relax, feel the union with the earth. Allow the outbreath and your mind to flow across your shoulder, down your arm and into your fingers, feel the breath flow out of your fingers and let your arm relax and tensions melt away.

Allow your thoughts to slowly and gently move to your left arm. Feel the arms contact with the earth, feel the arm relax, feel the union with the earth. Allow the outbreath and your mind to flow across your shoulder down your arm and into your fingers, feel the breath flow out of your fingers and let your arm relax and tensions melt away.

Allow your thoughts to drift to your back. Feel your shoulders and bottom in contact with the earth. Feel the gentle curve of the spine linking the two. Feel your back melt and sink into the earth. Feel your shoulders relax and sink. Let go, allow the earth to support you, allow yourself to let go, moving towards a more relaxed state of mind. Let your thoughts float up to the chest and abdomen. Feel the gentle rise and fall in time with your breath. Notice your belly rise with your in-breath and sink back towards your spine as you exhale. Feel the gentle in-breath opening up your heart centre. Enjoy the peace and calm of tranquillity – of feeling relaxed safe and supported by the earth, of letting go, of peace and of harmony between your mind and your body.

Allow your thoughts to drift to your head. Let your jaws relax and part slightly. Let your brow relax and soften, let a gentle smile play on your lips and eyes. Let your eyes sink back into their sockets. Let your tongue relax back in your mouth. Let your cheeks relax, soften. Feel the breath floating into your nostrils cool and calm and out with a warming sensation on your upper lip....Resting now for a few minutes...

Awakening:

Let your mind's eye follow your breath as it now sweeps into your chest filling your lungs with the power of life and watch your strong heart push this force throughout your body. Feel your arms and legs fill with this energy, flowing like a river and finally passing into your fingers and toes. Feel the tingle of energy as your body re-awakens. Extend your arms and legs as this energy brings movement back into your body and gently stretch in all directions or where you feel the most need. Pull your knees into your chest, gently rock to massage the small muscles in your back and roll onto one side, pause for a moment, and, gently raise yourself to a seated position. Keep your mind calm and focused as you return to the present.