


Yoga for Anxiety

Anxiety is a major factor for anyone going through cancer treatment and can have a hugely negative impact on quality of life. This week we will focus on calming anxiety, stress and worry through a series of gentle movements, breathing exercises and mudras that will all ease the intensity of anxious moments. Be sure to periodically check in with how the body, breath and mind are affected by these practices and your awareness of each of these levels of your being.


CENTERING

These preparation practices help to set the mood and intention for healing to take place.

	<p>Vowel Spiral A-E-I-O-U-M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find a comfortable seated position and begin to take the breath into the belly. Inhale down into the belly and exhale relaxing the belly. On your next breath begin sounding the following vowels:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- AHH at the Heart- AAA at the Throat- OOO at the Belly (lips very round)- EEE in the Head (smile wide with the mouth)- UUU at the Tailbone- MMM at the Crown- Repeat AHH at the Heart• <u>Benefits:</u> Each vowel resonates within your body at different levels and brings both awareness and relaxation.
---	--


PRANAYAMA

These breathing practices help to reduce stress and create calm in the mind.




	<p>Three-Part Breath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lay comfortably with support under the knees and head if needed. Inhale 1/3 volume into lower belly, 1/3 volume into middle ribs, 1/3 volume into upper chest, Exhale in the opposite order emptying chest, ribs and belly. Repeat for 1-3 minutes.• <u>Benefits:</u> Reduces stress, increases mindfulness
	<p>Exhale Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inhale through nostrils, then exhale completely through nostrils and pause after the exhalation holding the breath out. The length of the pause should be comfortable to maintain.• <u>Benefits:</u> Calming and grounding, quiets the mind

MUDRA

These mudras will help to calm the mind and ground the emotions.


	<p>Adhi Mudra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a soft fist with the thumb tucked inside. Turn palms down and rest on knees.• <u>Benefits:</u> Creates a sense of grounding, facilitates breath in lower abdomen, and connects with the stillness of our being.
---	--


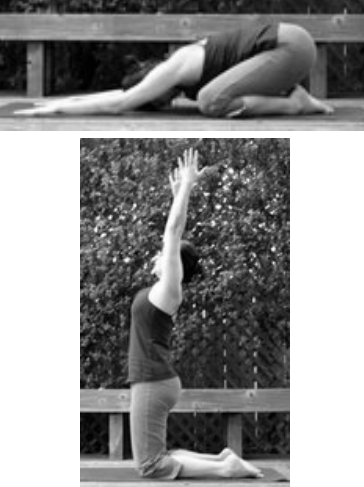
Yoga for Anxiety

	<p>Pala Mudra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place cupped left hand below navel with palm up; the cupped right hand at the level of the navel with the palm down. • Benefits: Releases stress and muscular tension, reduces blood pressure, cultivates a sense of wholeness.
	<p>Abhaya Varada Mudra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place cupped left hand below navel with palm up, right cupped hand at level of the shoulder with palm forward and elbow bent. • Benefits: Cultivates grounding and centering, reduces stress and anxiety.
	<p>Vajrapradama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clasp fingers and open palms toward heart; point thumbs upwards. Hold a few inches away from the chest. • Benefits: Releases constriction in the chest, builds self-trust and confidence.

ASANA


This week we will stretch the body to ease the effects of the fight and flight response that chronic stress and anxiety can create.

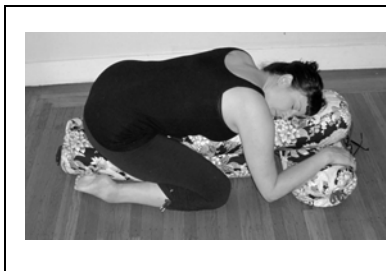
	<p>Supta Padangusthasana I, II, III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lie on the back with the knees bent. • Variation I: Draw your right knee into your chest and lengthen the left leg onto the floor. Wrap a strap around the ball of your foot and extend the leg into the air. Reach the hands up the strap until the elbows are straight but the shoulders are still grounded. • Variation II: Hold the strap in the right hand and place a block on the outside of the right hip. As you exhale, lower the leg directly out to the side so that the outer thigh rests on the block. Extend the foot into the strap and reach the left arm out to the side. To release, use the inner thigh to draw the leg up to center. • Variation III: Hold the strap in the left hand and slowly bring the leg across the body as you twist. To release, drop the right hip into the floor and allow the leg to follow. Hold each variation for 10-20 breaths. • Benefits: Stretches the hamstrings, calves, inner thigh, outer hip and buttock; also releases tension in the lower back.
---	---

	<h3>Childs Pose to Cobra</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin in Childs Pose with the arms overhead on the floor.• Inhale, keep hands where they are and move torso through arms to come into a backbend with pelvis pressing towards floor.• Exhale return to Childs Pose.• Repeat 5-10 times with the breath.• Benefits: Alternately stretches and strengthens front and back of body.
	<h3>Childs Pose to Hero</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin in Childs Pose.• Inhale and lift chest, raise arms overhead and press pelvis forward.• Exhale sit back on heels and fold forward bringing hands beside feet.• Repeat 5-10 times with the breath.• Benefits: Alternately stretches and strengthens the muscles of the torso front to back.

RESTORATIVES

Restorative postures to first gently open the heart and allow breath to move through the chest and upper lungs, then to fold into the fetal position and draw the awareness deep within.

	<h3>Supported Heart Opener</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up two bolsters perpendicular to mat with folded blanket on the one toward the back of the mat.• Sit on folded blanket or on floor facing away from bolsters.• Lie back so that shoulder blades and upper back are supported by shorter bolster and the head and neck are supported by the taller bolster.• The upper line of the shoulders and arms should fall in between the bolsters.• If the elbows do not readily reach the floor, support with more folded blankets.• Either straighten legs out to floor or rest knees over bolster.• Benefits: Opens heart and releases tension across chest, shoulders and neck
---	--



Supported Childs Pose

- Kneel straddling a long bolster. Place a second bolster over first with end of bolster in front of your low abdomen. A third bolster can go under the far end of the second bolster or use a folded blanket or block to support under it. Extend front of body over second bolster and rest forehead on backs of hands or turn head to the side.
- **Benefits:** Creates a calm, grounded space to get away from the demands of daily life.

MEDITATION

Return your awareness to your eyebrow center and imagine sitting at the edge of a deep still lake. Spend time creating the landscape around your lake, is it large or small, is there a rocky bank or a sandy shore? See yourself in a small steady vessel that will venture onto the surface of your lake. You are floating in a boat on the pond of your mind. You are safe in your boat, bobbing in the water, observing the landscape you created; the billowy white clouds, the deep blue sky, the green of the land around the pond. Visualize the waves on the surface of the lake, these represent the thoughts and activity of your mind. Are they gentle ripples or choppy waves? Hear the sound they make; feel the movement the waves create for your vessel, rocking gently like a cradle or thrashing from side to side?

Bring your attention back to your breath. Imagine that as you inhale and exhale the ripples and waves begin to subside. The smooth inhale and exhale of your breath bring calm and stillness to the water. Continue conscious breathing until the surface of your pond is smooth, glassy still and transparent. Gaze into the water and observe your reflection in the surface of the calm clear water. See your hair, your face, the intelligence in your eyes, a soft smile on your lips reflecting your new found sense of stillness. Notice the expansiveness of the sky reflected in the water below. You are completely at peace here. Look into the depths and sense the limitless universe. It is below you, above you, all around you – within you. Allow the clarity of this knowledge to seep deeply into your mind, your body and your consciousness.

Continue to look deeper and deeper into the water, trying to see to the very bottom. You try very hard to see what is lying on the lakebed but the harder you try to see it, the more waves form on top of the water which churn up the sediment obscuring your view. As thoughts disturb your concentration, do not try to push them away, simply acknowledge them and let them float away so that your mind can create stillness and clarity within the water.

Continue to gently focus your attention on stilling the waters of your mind so that you can see a glimpse of lake's bottom. Allow the breath to become calm, slow and steady. As your breath slows and calms, the waves on the surface of the lake also slow and calm. Your mind becomes still and clear like the water of the lake and you will begin to see what is lying on the lakebed easily and without strain. What is lying on the bottom of your lake? What symbol or item has been revealed by your consciousness in this moment of stillness? Gently hold onto this image as a profound inner silence arises from this gentle focus.

Witness and absorb the contentment and gratitude you discover as you connect with your limitless inner wisdom. In reality there is only now and the truth that is found there...what is... and what is not. Sitting peacefully in your boat of tranquility, you drift safely to shore and disembark onto the bank.