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A simple sequence to support you through challenging times.

These poses help to support your mind and body during difficult periods in your life, through times of stress, grief, or after illness. Recuperative and restorative poses are an important part of your yoga tool-kit - the organs and the nerves can be compromised through stress and a more sensitive approach is needed. During difficult times, don't try to work on strengthening poses - these may deplete what little energy you have and could lead to further problems. This is especially true if you are or have been ill. Focus rather on protecting and supporting yourself by working mindfully, taking things slowly and being prepared to rest as necessary.

Do not underestimate the ability of these poses to support and strengthen the body, mind and spirit. Practice them daily, once or twice if you can. Remember to keep your jaw, tongue and eyes soft, and to relax your facial muscles.

You will need a bolster or cushion, a mat, a chair, and a folded blanket. If you don't have a bolster, use another folded blanket to create 'lift' under the spine, either lengthways or across the body as shown.

Use a kitchen timer – this allows you to relax completely into the pose for the full time allowed and allows recuperation time for the mind and body.



1. Resting position

Lie down on your mat with your knees bent up. Lift your hips and put a yoga block under your sacrum – this is the hard bone at the back of your pelvis, between your tailbone and your waist. (Have a look at the picture.) Put your feet down on the floor hip-width apart, knees bent and together, to allow your abdominal muscles to rest. The legs should feel

completely relaxed, knees falling together naturally. Stay here, breathing evenly for 4-5 minutes. Lift your hips and slide the block out. Rest your back on the mat for 2 breaths. To come up, bend up your knees and roll over to your right hand side to push yourself up from the floor. Do not sit straight up.



2. Adho Mukha Virasana

Sit on your heels, keeping your feet and knees close together. This will stretch the tops of your feet, so if it feels painful, put a folded blanket on your mat, under your ankles. Now keep your big toes together and take your knees wide apart. Keeping your hips on your heels, walk your hands forward on the mat until your chest meets your thighs and your arms are straight. If

your hips come up or your forehead won't meet the floor, use a couple of thick books under your forehead. Rest here for 4-5 minutes, keeping your eyes closed and your brain quiet.



3. Supta baddhakonasana

Place the folded blanket at one end of your bolster. Sit on your mat at the other end of your bolster with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Slowly roll down along the bolster, bringing the soles of your feet together and drawing your heels towards you. Arrange the support for your knees so that there is no strain on your inner thighs, using yoga bricks or

cushions to support your knees and a strap or tie around your feet to draw them close. Arrange the folded blanket under your head and neck, but not under your shoulders. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 5 minutes. Slowly lift your knees together, roll to one side and push the bolster away. Then roll over to your right side, and push yourself up to sitting. (Don't sit straight up - you'll undo all the good work you have just done.)



4. Supported Passive Back-bend

Place a folded blanket at the top end of your mat, and your bolster or cushion across your mat about a third of the way down. Sit on your mat in front of the bolster with your legs bent, feet flat on your mat. Roll down over your bolster so that your back ribs come to rest on it, your chest lifts strongly up, and the back of your head rests on the blanket beyond. Your

shoulders will be in mid air and your arms will be on the floor at shoulder height, just beyond the bolster. Look at the picture to get your position correct before you finally stretch your legs out straight and relax. If you find the stretch intense at first, have more height in the blanket under your head, and/or put a cushion under your hips. As you become familiar with the pose, reduce the height of the blanket, and try without the cushion. The pose should feel relaxing. Stay here, breathing evenly for 3-4 minutes. To come up, bend up your knees and roll over to your right hand side to push yourself up from the floor. Do not sit straight up.



5. Legs over a chair

Put a chair sideways on your mat with a folded blanket on the seat. Sit down close to it, swinging your legs over the seat, and lie with your back on the floor and your legs resting over the seat of the chair. The edge of the seat should come right into the backs of your knees, so your calves rest completely on the seat. If you are less than about 5'6" tall, you might be

more comfortable with a block under your hips. If you are over 5'9", you will find more height on the chair seat more comfortable. Roll your shoulders back and have your hands either side of your body, palms facing upwards and fingers relaxed. Close your eyes and rest for 5 minutes, keeping your jaw relaxed and your mind focused on your gentle, steady breathing. When you feel ready, roll over to your right side and stay resting there for a few moments before you come up to sitting.



6. Savasana

Sit in the middle of your mat with your knees bent. Roll slowly down, keeping your spine straight, roll your shoulders back and take a folded blanket for your head if it feels 'thrown' back. Place a bolster under your knees and extend your legs over it. Let your legs relax completely. Draw your shoulder-blades down your back, lift your chest and roll your

shoulders to the floor. Have the backs of your hands on the floor or bend your elbows and rest your hands on your tummy, elbows out. Relax your face, your jaw and close your eyes. Take your tongue away from the roof of your mouth. Stay, breathing quietly, for 5 minutes. To come up, bend up your knees again and roll onto your right side. Rest here and push yourself up to sitting when you feel ready.

Remember to keep your jaw, tongue and eyes soft, and to relax your facial muscles.