

Yoga Support for Anxiety

An 8-pose gentle reset for moments when the body feels tense, restless or on high alert.

Anxiety is not only experienced in thoughts. It can show up as a racing heart, shallow breathing, tight muscles, restlessness, dizziness, stomach sensations, trembling or a strong urge to escape. Gentle yoga can offer a structured way to slow down, reconnect with the body and create a little more space around these sensations.

The aim is regulation, not perfect calm

You do not have to make anxiety disappear for this practice to be useful. The goal is to notice what is happening, reduce unnecessary effort and choose movements that feel manageable. If focusing on breathing makes you more anxious, keep your breath natural and focus instead on contact with the floor, chair or another steady point in the room.

8-pose gentle reset - 5 to 10 minutes

1	Easy pose	30-60 sec
2	Seated breathing	30-60 sec
3	Cat-cow	4-6 rounds
4	Child's pose	30-60 sec
5	Forward fold	20-40 sec
6	Legs on chair	1-2 min
7	Supine twist	20-40 sec each side
8	Resting pose	1-3 min

Before you begin

Choose a place where you feel reasonably safe and comfortable. Keep a chair, wall, cushions or blanket nearby. Move gently and stop if you feel pain, dizziness, faintness or unwell. This is an educational wellbeing resource, not medical treatment.

The eight movements

Keep the practice slow, optional and adaptable.

1. Easy pose

Sit on a chair, cushion or the floor. Let your hands rest somewhere comfortable. Notice the support underneath you rather than trying to hold a perfect posture.

2. Seated breathing

Allow the breath to remain natural. If comfortable, gently lengthen the exhale without forcing it. If breath awareness increases anxiety, return attention to your feet or surroundings.

3. Cat-cow

Move slowly between a small rounding and lengthening of the spine. This can also be done seated. Let movement follow a comfortable rhythm rather than trying to synchronise perfectly with the breath.

4. Child's pose

Use cushions, a bolster or a chair so the body feels supported. If folding forward feels claustrophobic or uncomfortable, choose a seated rest instead.

5. Forward fold

Keep the knees soft and use a chair for support. Make this a small hinge rather than a deep stretch. Come up slowly.

6. Legs on chair

Lie or recline with your lower legs supported. Adjust the head and back with cushions. This position can reduce physical effort while you orient to the room.

7. Supine twist

Keep the range small and supported with cushions. Pause on each side only if it feels comfortable.

8. Resting pose

Choose any position in which you can reduce effort. Keep your eyes open if closing them feels unsafe. Notice three neutral details in the room before finishing.

If panic sensations appear

Pause the sequence. Feel your feet, hands or back against a surface. Look around and name a few things you can see. Remind yourself that you can stop, change position or leave the practice. If symptoms are new, severe or medically concerning, seek appropriate medical help rather than assuming they are anxiety.

Understanding anxiety in the body

A nervous system response can feel powerful even when there is no immediate danger.

The stress response

When the brain detects threat, the body can prepare for action. Heart rate, breathing, muscle tension, attention and digestion may change. These responses are designed to protect us, but they can become distressing when they happen frequently or feel out of proportion to the situation.

Grounding before relaxation

For some people, being told to relax can create more pressure. Grounding can be a better first step: notice the room, feel the chair, press the feet gently into the floor or hold something with a familiar texture. Regulation often begins with feeling more oriented and supported, not with forcing calm.

Small, repeatable practice

A short practice used regularly may feel more approachable than waiting until anxiety is overwhelming. You might use only two or three poses before work, after a difficult conversation, before bed or while recovering from a stressful day.

When extra support is useful

If anxiety is persistent, significantly affects daily life, leads to avoidance, or is accompanied by frequent panic attacks, professional support can help. Depending on your needs this might include your GP, psychological therapy, counselling, occupational support or another qualified professional.

Emergency support

Yoga is not a substitute for urgent help. Seek emergency medical assistance for symptoms such as severe chest pain, collapse, major breathing difficulty, sudden neurological symptoms or anything that feels like a medical emergency.

Anxiety check-in & reflection

Use this to notice patterns rather than score your performance.

Day	Before	What I used	After	What helped?
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Reflection prompts

Before: Where do I notice anxiety in my body? What does my body seem to need: movement, stillness, space, warmth or support?

After: Has anything shifted, even slightly? Which pose felt safest? Was there anything I would change next time?

A message from Maggie

Anxiety can make everything feel urgent. You do not have to solve everything in this moment. This practice is simply somewhere to begin: one movement, one pause, one small choice at a time. You can keep your eyes open, use a chair, miss poses out or stop altogether. The practice belongs to you.

Sources & further information

This guide is informed by established NHS guidance on anxiety and panic and general evidence-based principles used in stress management, grounding and gentle physical activity. Yoga may support wellbeing for some people, but it should be used alongside appropriate healthcare where needed.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Educational wellbeing resource; not medical treatment.