

# Yoga for Anxiety Relief

Breathe. Release. Restore. Gentle movement and grounding for moments when anxiety feels loud.

Anxiety can affect thoughts, breathing, muscles, digestion, sleep and concentration. Yoga cannot remove the reasons you feel anxious, but gentle movement and grounding may help some people create a little more space around the sensations.

## You do not have to force yourself to calm down

Trying to make anxiety disappear can add another layer of pressure. Instead, notice what feels safe and manageable. Keep your eyes open if that feels better, move rather than stay still, and choose external grounding if focusing on the breath makes you more anxious.

## Six gentle poses

|   |                     |                  |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Child's Pose        | Feel safe & calm |
| 2 | Cat-Cow             | Release tension  |
| 3 | Seated Forward Fold | Quiet & ground   |
| 4 | Seated Twist        | Find balance     |
| 5 | Legs Up the Wall    | Supported rest   |
| 6 | Reclined Butterfly  | Relax & let go   |

## Breathing

Natural breathing is enough. If paced breathing feels helpful, gently lengthen the exhale without straining or holding your breath. Stop if you become dizzy, breathless or more distressed.

## Safety

Use props and adapt positions. Stop for pain, dizziness, faintness or feeling unwell. Yoga is optional wellbeing support, not a replacement for mental-health or medical care.

# A gentle anxiety-support sequence

Choose one or two movements if a full sequence feels like too much.

## 1. Child's Pose

Support the torso and head with cushions. If folding forward feels vulnerable, choose an upright seated position instead.

## 2. Cat-Cow

Move slowly on hands and knees or seated. Let the repeated movement give your attention something simple to follow.

## 3. Seated Forward Fold

Hinge only as far as comfortable and support your arms or head. Avoid pulling or pushing.

## 4. Seated Twist

Rotate gently and return slowly to centre. Keep both feet or sitting bones supported.

## 5. Legs Up the Wall

Rest the legs on a wall, sofa or chair. If lying down feels uncomfortable, choose a supported seated rest.

## 6. Reclined Butterfly

Lie back with the knees supported by cushions. Keep the feet farther away from the body if that feels easier.

## Grounding when breath focus is difficult

Name five things you can see, feel your feet or back against a surface, listen for sounds in the room, hold something textured, or gently move your hands. Grounding can be external; you do not have to close your eyes or focus inward.

# Understanding anxiety

Support is about more than relaxation.

## Anxiety and the nervous system

Anxiety can prepare the body for danger even when there is no immediate threat. A racing heart, tight muscles, nausea, shaking or restlessness can feel frightening, but these sensations can occur as part of the body's stress response.

## Reduce avoidable load

Hunger, exhaustion, sensory overload, caffeine, uncertainty and too many demands can intensify anxiety for some people. Notice what makes your system work harder and what practical changes are possible.

## Build predictability

Written plans, preparation, familiar routines and knowing what happens next can reduce uncertainty. For neurodivergent people, predictability and sensory adjustments may be particularly important.

## When anxiety needs more support

If anxiety is persistent, causes significant avoidance, panic, distress or difficulty functioning, consider speaking with a GP or qualified mental-health professional. If you feel at immediate risk of harm, seek urgent support.

## Kindness rather than performance

A two-minute practice counts. Stopping counts. Choosing not to do yoga today also counts. The goal is not to become good at calming down; it is to learn what genuinely supports you.

# Anxiety check-in

Use this to notice patterns without judging yourself.

| Day | Anxiety /10 | Body clues | What I tried | What helped? |
|-----|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Mon |             |            |              |              |
| Tue |             |            |              |              |
| Wed |             |            |              |              |
| Thu |             |            |              |              |
| Fri |             |            |              |              |
| Sat |             |            |              |              |
| Sun |             |            |              |              |

## Reflection prompts

What tends to happen before anxiety rises? What sensations do I notice first? Does movement, stillness or external grounding help more? What practical demand could I reduce? Who can I contact when I need support?

## A message from Maggie

Anxiety can make your world feel smaller and your body feel as though it has to stay on alert. You do not have to force yourself into calm. Start with what feels safe, give yourself choices, and remember that needing support is part of being human.

## Evidence-informed note

Yoga and mind-body practices may support anxiety symptoms and general wellbeing for some people, but effects vary. They should be used as optional complementary tools rather than as a cure or replacement for appropriate psychological or medical care.

Space to Breathe Therapy — educational wellbeing resource; not medical treatment.