

# 8 Accessible Yoga & Mindfulness Practices to Support Teacher SEL & Wellness



## Introduction

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Social and Emotional Learning has never been more vital, but how often do we have opportunities to embody SEL and wellness practices ourselves as educators?

When we turn inward, we can discover resources to break the cycle of burnout, connect with our wellness, and cultivate better relationships with ourselves. This creates a positive ripple effect. Taking the time to nurture our own wellness leads to improved wellness for those around us. In other words, when we as teachers feel better, students, schools, and communities thrive.

This toolkit puts teachers first by offering:

- 8 simple, yoga and mindfulness tools to address and nurture your own social-emotional learning, health and wellness
- 3 short practices for your own use personally and professionally

**Because at the end of the day, your wellness matters. You matter.**





# Yoga Breathing

Calming / energizing



## Supporting Self-Awareness

**SEL Skill:** Identifying one's emotions (CASEL)

**Ocean Breath:** Calms the mind, and releases tension



## Supporting Self-Management

**SEL Skill:** Managing one's emotions (CASEL)

**Sunrise / Sunset Breath:** Focuses scattered energy, and releases physical & mental stress

# Ocean Breath

## Calming Breathing Exercise



### Benefits

- Builds internal heat
- Calms the mind
- Releases tension in the neck and lower face

### Instructions

1. Let students know how many rounds of breath you will practice.
2. Begin by sitting up tall.
3. Inhale through your nose.
4. Exhale, open your mouth “hahhh,” making the sound of an ocean wave.



### Modification

Have students practice “fogging up a mirror” with their breath as another way to understand and visualize this breath.

You can add “Sunshine Arms” as well with inhaling arms over the head, palms together. Exhale hands through the heart center.

# Sunrise / Sunset Breath

## Energizing Breathing Exercise



### Benefits

- Focuses scattered energy
- Awakens the body, especially the arms, shoulders and torso
- Releases physical and mental stress

### Instructions

1. Begin by sitting up tall.
2. Inhale, bring your right hand to your hip while your left arm swings up and overhead.
3. Exhale, start to bend to the right in your torso, and circle your left arm down and back to your left thigh. Come back to a neutral seat and then repeat to the opposite side.



1



2





3



4

# Yoga Poses

Strengthen, energize, focus, activate, restore

-  **Supporting Responsible Decision Making**  
**SEL Skill:** Demonstrating curiosity and open mindedness (CASEL)  
**Tree:** Stimulates the mind, stretches & strengthens the body
-  **Supporting Relationship Skills**  
**SEL Skill:** Resisting negative social pressure (CASEL)  
**Warrior I:** Develops willpower, increases alertness & endurance



# Tree

## Balancing Yoga Pose

### Physical Benefits

- Lengthens the spine
- Strengthens the ankles, calves, knees, hamstrings, abdominals, back, and neck
- Stretches the quadriceps, hip flexors, chest, and shoulders

### Mental Benefit

- Builds concentration and focus

### Gaze Point

- Down the nose

### Instructions

Variation A - Arm on Chair | Variation B - Arms Overhead

1. Begin in Mountain Pose on the side of your chair.
2. Inhale, bring your hands onto your hips.
3. Exhale, place your outside foot to the inside of your ankle of the foot closet to the chair.
4. Inhale, stand tall in your tree body.
5. Exhale, place your inside arm on the back of the chair and extend your outside arm up
- 5b. Exhale, extend both of your arms up
6. Breathe.
7. When you are ready, bring your hands back down to your hips and return to Mountain Pose.
8. Repeat on the other side.



Variation A



Variation B

# Warrior I

## Standing Yoga Pose



### Physical Benefits

- Increases endurance
- Strengthens the ankles, knees, quadriceps, hamstrings, abdominals, back, and arms
- Stretches the calves, quadriceps, hamstrings, hip flexors, chest, and shoulders

### Mental Benefits

- Builds focus
- Increases alertness
- Develops willpower

### Gaze Point

- Down the nose or the sky

### Instructions

Variation A - Arm on Chair | Variation B - Arms Overhead

1. Begin standing behind your chair in Mountain Pose with your feet hips distance apart.
2. Inhale, bring your hands to your hips.
3. Exhale, step your left foot back as far as is comfortable for you, keeping your right foot facing forward.
4. Inhale, bend into your front right knee until you feel a stretch, with your back leg straight.
5. Exhale, bring your arms to the chair.  
5b. Exhale, reach your arms up to the sky.
6. Breathe.
7. When you are ready, bring your hands back to your hips and step your left foot forward to Mountain Pose.
8. Repeat on the other side.



Variation A

Variation B





# Brain Breaks

Connecting & building Community



## Supporting Social Awareness

**SEL Skill:** Understanding and expressing gratitude (CASEL)

**All Good Things:** Develops communication, creativity, expression



## Supporting Relationship Skills

**SEL Skill:** Communicating effectively (CASEL)

**Go, Stop, Answer:** Develops communication, focus, awareness

# All Good Things

## Calming Brain Break



### Skills

- Communication
- Creativity
- Expression
- Imagination

### Instructions

1. Students begin in Mountain Pose standing in front of or behind their seats.
2. Together, students repeat the following words and repeat the movements three times to feel those good things.
3. “All good things rain down on me.” Students raise their arms, scoop their arms in, and press their arms down in front of them.
4. “All good things grow up through me.” Students scoop their hands in and up together to their hearts.
5. “All good things surround me.” Students press their hands forward and around their bodies as if they are doing a breaststroke.



### Modification

Educators can offer a few examples of how there can be different interpretations of the poses. For example, arms out to a “T” could be Star or Warrior II.

# Go, Stop, Answer

## Energizing Brain Break



### Skills

- Physical awareness
- Spatial awareness
- Communication
- Focus

### Instructions

1. At the teacher's cue of "go," students move around the room. At the teachers' cue of "stop," students pause in place.
2. While paused, students each respond to a prompt given by the teacher. For example, "What does your body feel when you are under pressure?"
3. The teacher's prompts may be relevant to school curriculum, yoga, mindfulness, or SEL topics, as well as general topics that students may contribute. For example, "Who is the greatest rap artist of all time and why?"



### Modifications

You can suggest different movement styles (qualitative: sharp, smooth, heavy, light, controlled, free-flowing) as well as variations in speed.

Offer the option to pause and turn to a partner or small group of peers to share the answers to the questions when the teacher asks.

You may give a time limit for these answers, such as 15 seconds.

Students can offer their own questions to be included in the game.

# Relaxation

To regulate; to reset



## Supporting Self-Management

**SEL Skill:** Identifying and using stress management techniques (CASEL)

**Tense & Release:** Releases tension & stress from the body & mind



## Supporting Self-Awareness

**SEL Skill:** Integrating personal and social identities (CASEL)

**Layers:** Develops self-awareness & cultivates presence



# Tense & Release

## Relaxation

 [Click Here for Video Instructions](#)

### Instructions

Read or paraphrase the following script. Let students know this practice will be 2-5 minutes long. Invite students to come to lying in Legs up the Chair or Forward Fold at the Desk.

“ This practice will be about [insert minutes]. You can keep your eyes open or close your eyes, whichever is most comfortable for you. Take a deep breath in, take a deep breath out. As if you're falling asleep, let go of all thoughts. Just feel your breath. I'll wait for everyone to settle, sigh and melt, release any movement and tension. With every breath, become more and more calm... great.

I am going to take you through a progressive relaxation. When I call out a body part and say 'inhale,' tighten only that body part. When I say 'exhale,' release that body part.

Beginning with your feet and only your feet, inhale. Tighten your feet and only your feet. Exhale, release and let go.

Bring your awareness to your legs, your shins, your calves, your thighs, and your hamstrings. Inhale and tighten your legs. Exhale, release and let go.

Bring your awareness to your bottom, your low belly, and your low back. Inhale and tighten. Exhale, release and let go.

Bring your awareness to your upper chest, your upper back, between your shoulder blades, and your shoulders. Inhale and tighten. Exhale and release.

Bring your awareness to your arms, your forearms, your biceps. Inhale and tighten your arms. Exhale and release.

Bring your awareness to your hands, make two tight fists. Inhale and tighten. Exhale and release.

Bring your awareness to your face, pucker your face, your eyes, your nose, your lips. Inhale and tighten. Exhale and release.”

Finally, bring your awareness to your entire body. Inhale, tighten your entire body. Exhale and release.

Take a deep breath in through your nose. And exhale out of your mouth.

Take two minutes of clock time to reflect. I'll let you know when it's time to return.

(Pause for 1- 2 minutes.)

Gently begin to wiggle your fingers and your toes. Take any final stretches that feel good to you and slowly come back to a comfortable seated position in your chair. ”

# Tense and Release

## Relaxation



### Modifications

This relaxation exercise is especially useful when frustrations and tensions are high. Use this exercise to help youth return to a state of balance. Encourage children to notice how much tension they unconsciously hold. With the awareness this exercise develops, you and your students will learn when to use yoga tools to reconnect mind, body and breath. Offerings for various body parts:

- To tense the stomach, have students pull their stomachs inward
- To tense the face, cue students to squint their eyes
- To tense the hands and arms, cue students to squeeze their fists
- To tense the feet and legs, cue students to curl their toes as if they are trying to pick something up with their toes



# Layers

## Relaxation



### Instructions

Read or paraphrase the following script. Let students know this practice will be 2-5 minutes long. Invite students to come to lying in Legs up the Chair or Forward Fold at the Desk.



This practice will be about [insert minutes]. You can keep your eyes open or close your eyes, whichever is most comfortable for you. Take a deep breath in, take a deep breath out. As if you're falling asleep, let go of all thoughts. Just feel your breath. I'll wait for everyone to settle, sigh and melt, release any movement and tension. With every breath, become more and more calm... great.

With kindness and non-judgment, bring awareness to yourself as you see yourself. Picture fully your whole being and notice what or if any feelings start to arise. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in those feelings, then breathe them out.

Now, imagine seeing yourself as a collection of layers—a carefully and beautifully stacked arrangement of all the pieces that you are.

Start with your top most layer, the external. Perhaps, this is who you imagine people see you as, or who you want people to see you as. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in this layer, and breathe out as you peel that layer away.

Take a moment to think about what's underneath. What makes up that second layer of you. Maybe the person you are to your friends, or even your family. What's different or the same about this layer? Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in this layer, breathe out and let it peel away.

The third layer is who you are to yourself, the internal, who no one else truly knows, except for you. This may be a place of vulnerability, of uncertainty, or of strength and resilience, or even creativity and that which is still yet to be discovered. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Before you peel this layer away, ask yourself: How can I make this part of myself feel more loved, supported, and appreciated?

As emotions or sensations arise, use your breath as a reminder to acknowledge the positive and release the negative.

I'll give you a few moments to reflect.

Pause for a few moments.

Take a deep breath in, and deep breath out. Breathe in that which makes you uniquely you, and breath out anything holding you back. Breathe in all the layers as they work together, and breathe out any unhelpful expectations of yourself. As you breathe, experience you, exactly as you are.

Gently begin to move your fingers and your toes. Take any final movements that feel good to you in your body, and slowly come back to a comfortable seated position in your chair. ”



### Modification

When reflecting on this relaxation afterwards with your students it may be relevant to inquire about any thoughts students had during the visualization. Were they engaging in negative self talk? What judgment thoughts came up? This may or may not be relevant to your theme and concept and can be incorporated as needed

# 1 Minute Simple, Accessible Practices for You & Your Students



1. Ocean Breath



2. All Good Things



# 3 Minute Simple, Accessible Practices for You & Your Students



1. Ocean Breath



2. All Good Things



3. Tense & Release - 1



3. Tense & Release - 2

# 5 Minute Simple, Accessible Practices for You & Your Students



1. Ocean Breath



3. Sunrise / Sunset Breath - 1



3. Sunrise / Sunset Breath - 2



3. Sunrise / Sunset Breath - 3



3. Sunrise / Sunset Breath - 4



3. Warrior I - 1



3. Warrior I - 2



3. Warrior I - 3



3. Warrior I - 4



4. All Good Things



5. Tense & Release - 1



5. Tense & Release - 2

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[www.yogaed.com](http://www.yogaed.com)

[info@yogaed.com](mailto:info@yogaed.com)

+1 310 471 1742

