

# REACHING TOWARD SERENITY

## SIMPLE YOGA POSES TO BALANCE MIND AND BODY

Even the most skilled multitaskers among us—while we'd hate to admit it—find it difficult to balance the demands of career and household and still have energy in reserve supply for friends and family. Fortunately, here's one surefire way to regain our balance when the stress level heats up.

It may sound revolutionary in its simplicity, but pencil in a few minutes in your personal calendar for yourself. Use the time, whether it's five or 15 minutes, to try some yoga. You'll be surprised how energized you feel afterward—and how relaxed.

Find a quiet spot in your home or gym to try out this specialized sequence of simple poses created specifically for multitaskers on the go by certified yoga instructor Jillian Pransky, a nurturing, playful guide who teaches at Be Yoga in New York City. To learn more about Jillian's workshops, classes and teaching techniques, log on to [www.yogajillian.com](http://www.yogajillian.com).

BY LIZ PARKS



### WARRIOR II SANSKRIT NAME: VIRABHADRASANA II

This warrior pose inspires heroic strength, lightness and poise. It limbers and strengthens legs, hips and shoulders, expanding the chest and improving balance and concentration.

#### HOW TO DO IT:

Standing with feet together, stretch your hands out to the sides away from each other being careful not to overextend. Step your feet apart, so your heels line up under your wrists. Turn your right foot out to the right at a 90-degree angle. Bring your left foot around to about 45 degrees. Bend your right knee directly over the ankle, making sure your knee and toes are pointing in the same direction. Feel your heels grounding down as you firm your thighs. Feel your ribs lifting up off your hips.

Take four to eight deep breaths. Straighten your legs. Bring your feet back to parallel, toes pointing in the same direction. Do same position on each side two to three times.



### FAN POSE SANSKRIT NAME: PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

This is a pose of surrender, teaching you how to consciously let go. This pose may help depression and calm the mind. The spine is elongated, releasing the compression of disks caused by a day of sitting and standing. In addition, the abdominal organs are stimulated and massaged, the nervous system is calmed, and circulation is increased throughout the body.

#### HOW TO DO IT:

Standing with your feet together, extend your arms to the side, away from each other. Step your feet apart, lining your heels up under your wrists. Feet are parallel and even with each other. Place hands on hips. Inhale, lifting the chest to the sky. Exhale, bend forward from your hips and place hands on the floor (or a chair if it feels too challenging). Feel your feet rooting into the floor, as you firm your leg muscles and straighten your legs. Release your spine, imagining each vertebra sliding away from each other toward the floor. Relax and stay for four to

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK COLLINS



eight breaths. Bring your hands to your hips and, with strong legs and a flat back, come up to standing position. Step your feet together one at a time. Repeat two to three times.

### DOWNWARD FACING DOG

#### SANSKRIT NAME: ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

Downward facing dog pose is a full body energizer, releasing tension held in the shoulders and back of the legs. It stretches the entire length of the back body, while strengthening hands, arms and shoulders. While it is certainly an exhilarating pose because it is a gentle inversion (the head is lower than the heart), it calms the mind and the spirit.

#### HOW TO DO IT:

Start on all fours, knees under hips, hands under shoulders. Curl your toes into the ground. Keeping your knees bent, lift your hips to the sky as you push hands into the ground. You will look like an upside down letter V. Line your ears up between your upper arms. Keep lifting your hips to the sky, so you do not feel too much pressure on your wrists. Slowly begin to reach through your heels as you press your thighs toward the wall behind you (heels do not have to reach the floor). Take four to eight breaths. Return to all fours. Repeat two or three times.



### COBRA

#### SANSKRIT NAME: BHUJANGASANA

This pose is a heart opener and expresses an exhilarating "openness to life." It is also about the courage and will power "to bend backwards." Because the heart is so open here, it is common to experience a subtle release of held emotions in this pose. This pose stimulates the spine, strengthens and relaxes the back muscles and the nervous system.

#### HOW TO DO IT:

Lie on your belly with legs hip-width apart or wider. Place your forehead on the floor. Slide your fingertips in line with your breastbone, palms open and flat. Lengthen your tailbone toward your heels. Press your pelvis into the floor. As you inhale, allow your chest and head to lift off the floor. Imagine a marionette puppet string is lifting you upward, starting from your back body, from between your shoulder blades. Feel your neck lengthen as you shine your heart forward. Eyes gaze about 10 feet in front of you. Hold for three to four breaths. Lower. Repeat two to three times.

### RELAXATION POSE

#### SANSKRIT NAME: SAVANSANA

In relaxation pose, the entire body is fully supported by the earth, enabling you to deeply surrender the body and the mind. Practicing this pose helps to achieve a state of meditation, somewhere between sleeping and waking. This pose appears simple, but is the most difficult to master. It calms the mind and causes a relaxation response throughout the entire body, even the skin, muscles, and nerves are relaxed.

#### HOW TO DO IT:

Slowly lie down on your back and find a comfortable position. Separate your legs about hip distant apart. Place your arms by your sides, palms open to face the sky. Take three long juicy breaths. Let your lungs, chest and belly expand as you breathe in and to soften as you exhale. On each exhale drop your body weight down into the ground. Notice the ground underneath you. Trust that it will hold you up. Stay here and relax with your breath for 3 to 5 minutes. Even longer if you can. Never skip this one!

