Yoga for Healthy Immunity
We can’t be there but we are here for you.

Yoga Behind Bars is a Seattle-based non-profit that offers adult and youth programs in prisons and jails. We teach yoga and movement informed by student feedback, modern neuroscience, and ancient wisdom traditions. Half of the 40 classes we teach per week in Washington state are led by volunteers and half are led by incarcerated teachers, all trained in trauma-informed yoga instruction.

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Sequence: Yoga for Small Spaces

1. Sukhasana (sweet seat): Sit in a cross-legged position or in a chair. Acknowledge your surroundings (sights, sounds, etc.) and then close or soften your eyelids and begin to shift your focus inward. Become aware of sensations in your body and the way you are breathing. Take five conscious breaths.

2. Stay in sukhasana. Keep your spine vertical, but tip your left ear to your left shoulder. Take 3 deep breaths.

3. Now extend your right arm on a low diagonal to the right. Breath into the right side of your neck. Slowly stretch your right arm along side your right ear to lengthen your whole right side from right hip to right fingertips. Take time here to allow for 3 slow, deep, conscious breaths. Lower your right arm and bring your head back to center. Relax your arms with your hands in your lap.

4. Repeat on the right side.

4. Make your way to all fours with both hands and both knees on the ground. Place your hands shoulder width apart and slightly ahead of your shoulders. Place your knees slightly behind your hips.

5. Marjorasana (Cat Pose): On your exhalation, round your back to look toward your belly. On your inhalation, arch your spine to lift your head and tailbone.

6. From all fours, press your hips back towards your heels. Stretch your arms forward on the floor. Take 5 breaths here. Option (not shown): Walk your hands and torso to the left while keeping your pelvis centered over your heels. Take 3 breaths and then do this on the right side.

7. From all fours, step your left leg directly out to your left. Plant your right hand down and lift your left arm up towards the sky, twisting your torso to the left. Repeat this on the right side.

8. Downward facing dog: From all fours tuck your toes under and lift your knees away from the floor. Lift your hips up and back. Make the shape of a capitol A with your whole body. Hands on the floor, arms stretched straight. Balls of your feet on the earth with a slight bend in your knees. Lift your hips as high as you can.

9. From downward dog, bend your left knee and stretch your right leg straight. Switch sides. As you alternate bending and straightening your legs keep your breath moving fluidly through your body. Now pause in a neutral downward dog, with a slight bend in your knees.

10. Forward fold: Inhale, lift your head and heart. Look forward. Exhale, slightly bend your knees and fold over your legs. Relax your head. From forward fold, place your hands on your waist. Inhale your spine long, look forward and rise to stand.
11. Tadasana (Mountain Pose): Stand with your feet sitting bone distance apart. All 3 points of your feet (center of your heels, inner and outer edges of the balls of your feet) on the floor. Interlace your hands. Turn your palms up to the ceiling and stretch your arms straight up. Take 5 breaths. Lean your head back slightly and lift your chest.

12. Fold forward to Forward Fold on your exhale. Inhale lift your head. Exhale step your right foot back toward the back edge of your mat in Crescent Lunge. Place your right knee on the ground and inhale your arms and torso up to vertical. Stretch your arms alongside your ears. Take 3 breaths.

13. On your exhalation, place your hands on the floor, framing your left foot. Lift your right knee.

14. Keep your right hand on the floor and raise your left arm up to the sky into Revolved Crescent Lunge. Turn your heart to the left. Take 3 breaths. On your next inhale release both hands to the floor. Exhale and step back to Downward Facing Dog. Take 3 breaths.

15. Inhale move forward to plank pose, or the top of a push up. Bend your elbows and lower your knees, then the whole front of your body to the ground, keeping the elbows close to your body.


17. Place your hands next to your ribcage and press up to the top of a push up. On your exhalation reach back into Downward Dog.

18. Walk your feet forward to meet your hands in Forward Fold and fold. Inhale, lift your head and heart. Look forward. Exhale, fold over your legs. Relax your head. From Forward Fold, place your hands on your waist. Inhale your spine long, look forward and rise up to stand.

19. Stand in Mountain Pose. Bend your knees as though you are sitting back into a tall chair in Fierce Pose. Stretch your arms alongside your ears. Take 3 breaths. On your last exhale fold forward into Forward Fold.

Repeat entire sequence (11-19) on your left side starting in Mountain Pose.
20. Warrior I: Start in Mountain Pose. Inhale to lengthen your spine. On your exhalation, step your right leg back into a lunge. Place your right heel on the floor, bringing your back foot to angle on the floor. Inhale and lift your arms alongside your ears. Take 3 breaths.

21. Warrior II: Now slide your right foot back a little. Keep your right heel down and angle your foot so that it is parallel to the short side of your mat or the wall that your back leg is extending toward. Open your arms straight out to your sides and take 3 breaths.

22. On your exhalation, place your hands on the floor, framing your left foot. Lift your right heel. Exhale to step back to Downward Dog. Take 3 breaths. Inhale move forward to plank pose or the top of a push up. Bend your elbows and lower your knees, then the whole front of your body to the ground.

23. Locust pose: Lying on your belly, stretch your arms back beside your legs. Stretch your feet away from you head. On your inhale lift your arms, legs, heart and head. On your exhale lower down. Repeat 5 times.

24. Keep your hands next to your ribcage, inhale and press up to the top of a push up. On your exhale reach back into Down Dog (pic 22).

25. Walk your feet forward to meet your hands in Forward Fold and fold. Inhale, lift your head and heart. Look forward. Exhale, fold over your legs. Relax your head. From Forward Fold, place your hands on your waist. Inhale your spine long, look forward and rise up to stand.

26. Fierce Pose: Stand in Mountain Pose. Bend your knees as though you are sitting back into a tall chair. Stretch your arms alongside your ears. Take 3 breaths. On your last exhalation fold forward into Forward Fold.

27. Tree Pose: From Tadasana place your hands on your waist. Shift your weight onto your left foot. Bring the sole of your right foot to your inner calf and balance in Tree pose. Balance here for 5 full breaths.

Repeat standing on your right foot.

Repeat entire sequence (20-26) on your left side starting in Mountain Pose.
28. Lie down on your back. Place both feet on the floor. Cross your left ankle over your right knee to make a figure four, keep your left foot flexed. You can keep your right foot on the floor or thread your hands around the back of your right thigh, lifting your right foot away from the floor. Repeat this with your right ankle over your left knee.

29. Bridge pose: Lie on your back with both feet on the floor. Place your arms alongside your hips. Bend your elbows. Press down through your feet and upper arms. Lift your hips and spine. Take 5 breaths before lowering down.

30. Reclined twist, (top right) Lying on your back with knees bent lower your knees to the right and stretch your arms out in a “T”. Pause in this twist for 5-10 breaths. Inhale back to center to switch sides.

31. Savasana (final resting pose): After the completion of this energy-restoring practice, rest on your back with arms and legs outstretched. Remain here for 1-15 minutes in a sweet state of rest and renewal.

Notice how you feel after your practice - mind, body, and soul.

YBB Favorite: Tense & Release

This can be done while resting on the ground, seated or standing. Make yourself as comfortable as possible. Bring your awareness to your hands and squeeze them into fists on an in-breath. As you breathe out, slowly release the tension in your hands and let the fists unfurl. You might imagine squeezing juice out of an orange or lime. If you like, you can repeat a few more times. Do the same with your shoulders, and then your face.

This can be practiced at any time with any part of the body. It can be helpful just prior to final rest/savasana. You can do this exercise with any part of the body that feels tight.
Anatomy Focus: Yoga for Healthy Lungs

Your breath is intimately connected to your state of mind, and has been used for millenia to affect states of consciousness. Take a full breath right now and notice if your chest lifts or if your belly pushes forward. The primary organs involved in breathing are the lungs and diaphragm, and they cause these actions (see figure below). Yoga in general is wonderful for lung health due to the focus on full, deep breaths and the element of cardiovascular activity. The three exercises below, however, are some of our absolute favorites for supporting healthy, vibrant lungs. Enjoy!

1. Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose): This pose is designed to open the muscles in the front of your chest & shoulders, as well as the hip flexor muscles.

   1. Start lying down with your knees bent and hip distance apart. Press your feet into the floor and lift your hips up towards the ceiling. Keep your knees hip distance apart.
   2. Interlace your fingers underneath your hips and roll your shoulders inward towards the spine so that you have your outer upper arms on the ground.
   3. Press your feet down to lift your hips and press your outer wrists and arms down to lift your chest towards your face.
   4. Soften your throat muscles and focus on breathing deeply, expanding your ribcage as you inhale.
   5. Repeat 3 times and notice how your breath feels afterwards.

2. Restorative Chest Opener: This pose is a simple way to open the muscles in the front of your chest and between your ribs (intercostal muscles).

   1. Roll up a towel, blanket, or other soft, bulky object and place it underneath your mid back, behind your heart center.
   2. Lie over the object with legs straight or bent, allowing your weight to drop down and spine move into body.
   3. Try bringing your arms out to the side in a T-shape or reach them overhead, grasping your elbows and dropping them towards the floor behind you.
   4. Breathe into the space between your ribs and stay for 1 to 5 minutes. Notice how your breath feels!

3. Pursed-Lip Breathing for Healthy Lungs: This practice can slow down your breathing, reducing the labor needed to breathe by keeping your airways open longer. This makes it easier for the lungs to function and improves the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. An added benefit is that it increases the length of the exhalation in particular, which can be soothing for your nervous system. You can do this any time!

   1. Inhale slowly through your nostrils, feel your body expand
   2. Purse your lips, as if about to blow on something
   3. Breathe out as slowly as possible through pursed lips. Imagine that you are blowing on a very small fire to make it grow rather than to blow it out
   4. Your exhale may take around twice as long as your inhale when breathing in this way
   5. Repeat 5-10 times
   6. Pause, come back to your natural breath and notice how you feel in your body and mind
The Body Scan/ Self Map Meditation

PURPOSE/EFFECTS:
The Body Scan helps bring us to present-moment awareness, acquaints us with the many sensations that occur throughout our bodies, and can potentially help relieve stress and anxiety through downregulating our nervous systems.

As you begin:
- Sit or lie down on your back in a comfortable position with your eyes open or closed. Keeping eyes closed can make inner awareness stronger.
- Take some time to check-in with yourself, notice how you are feeling in your body and mind. This is a chance to tune into and let go of tension in parts of the body that are feeling tight—such as the jaw, neck and shoulders, or even gripping in the thighs or belly.
- Notice the parts of your body in contact with the ground/mat. Imagine softening around those areas.
- Allow everything to fade into the background but your body. Agree to meet what you find in your body with friendliness.

During the body scan:
- Try to bring an attitude of curiosity to the practice, as if you are getting to know your body for the first time.
- Feel and be aware of any and all sensations that are present, such as tingling, tightness, heat, cold, pressure, dullness, etc.
- If you do not feel any sensations in a particular region, simply observe that and move on.
- Notice if you can perceive any thoughts or emotions that come up as you move through your body. Note these thoughts and emotions, and then return to the bare physical sensations that you are experiencing.
- Imagine you’re taking a tour of your body — noticing to see what’s there just today. Simply pay attention and experience them, one by one.
- If you feel any pain or discomfort in parts of your body, try to explore it for even a few seconds, feeling the various aspects of the sensation(s).
- Once you have scanned a body part, let that part fade from awareness. Release it and move on to the next region of your body.

Body Scan

- Start to bring your attention to your breathing
- Then start with your left foot. Feel how your heel rests on the floor/mat. Are your toes colder than the rest of your foot? If you have a sock on or a blanket over you, can you notice the texture and weight of the fabric?
- Travel up the left leg and stop along the way to scan your ankle, then the calf, the shin, the knee and the thigh until you reach your left hip.
- Cross over to the other side, and start with your right foot, and then travel up the right leg.
- Bring your attention to your pelvic region and buttocks.
- Then travel to your stomach and the organs in your abdominal region, low back, and upper back, including the shoulder blades.
- Now bring your awareness to your chest and rib basket, heart, and lungs.
- Notice both hands and then move up the arms until you finish with the shoulders.
- Move on to your neck and throat, jaw, mouth (teeth, tongue, lips) and travel to your nose, eyes, forehead, and ears.
- Then bring your attention to your skull and scalp.
- Finally, become aware of the whole body and rest for a few minutes in this expansive awareness.

CONNECTING

- After you scan the head, feel the entire body. Feel your head connected to your neck, your neck connected to your torso, the torso connected to the arms, and the torso connected to your legs and feet.
- Finally, feel the skin around the whole body. Pay attention to the sensations on your skin (texture, pressure, temperature)

CAUTION: If you notice intense fear or overwhelmingly strong emotions related to a particular part of the body, please discontinue the practice.
Body Scan Activity

Take 5 or more focused minutes to conduct & record your body scan. Be as detailed as possible. Mark the areas on your body where you feel the described sensations. Use the appropriate symbols and add written notes to elaborate.

If you like you can use the below signs, or you can create your own system of mapping sensations.

- Tingly ///
- Tight/Stiff xxx
- Loose/flexible ===
- Airy/Light ooo
- Dense/Heavy □□
- Throbbing AA
- Numb/Dull VV
- Achy ###
- Tense ++
- Relaxed ≈≈

Use the space below or your journal to write down any thoughts/feelings/sensations you experienced. Also note if and how you feel different from when you started.

The Body Scan is a variation of a Burmese Vipassana meditation practice that involves scanning the body for physical sensations. This meditation is also done in various yoga practices. The Body Scan is used in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), created by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.
Heartfull® Meditation: Mental Centering Technique

from overwhelmed     to calm

“I offer my mind and senses to my heart, where love awaits me.”
“I choose to be wise.”

calm       aware      centered       clear       focused       intuitive

Imagine gentle pink Light in your heart center with a feeling of pure Love. With your eyes closed, place your hands with your fingers together and slightly cupped on the sides of your head, facing your ears. Your hands should be approximately 3 inches away from your head.

Exhaling, bring your hands together in Namaste, not more than 1 inch away from your face, with the tips of your thumbs at the same level as the eyebrows.

Inhale, then on the next exhalation, bring your hands down SLOWLY to your heart center. As you do this, make your mind follow a straight line in the center of your body (the ray of Light), offering your mind to your heart.

Repeat this sequence 3 times

When you:
- have too many thoughts
- are tired of living in the mind
- are daydreaming too much
- feel unfocused
- feel overwhelmed
- feel confused or scattered

Also may help with:
- feel angry or annoyed
- when your eyes and forehead are tense and painful
- if you have trouble relaxing your mind, body or eyes.

- falling asleep
- bringing your awareness back into your body, to the safe place where love glows
- being aware while doing exercise
- preventing injuries and accidents
Philosophy: The Koshas

Kosha means sheath, cover, subtle body, treasury, from the root word ‘kus’, to enfold. They are layers of our being that explain our physical and psychological self. They nestle into each other like layers of an onion or Russian Dolls or a sword in a scabbard.

This excerpt from the Taittiriya Upanishad, a sacred Indian text, explains the various layers of the being:

**ANNA-MAYA KOSHA**

“Human beings consist of a material body built from the food they eat. Those who care for this body are nourished by the universe itself.

**PRANA-MAYA KOSHA**

Inside this is another body made of life energy. It fills the physical body and takes its shape. Those who treat this vital force as Divine experience excellent health and longevity because this energy is the source of physical life.

**MANO-MAYA KOSHA**

Within the vital force is yet another body, this one made of thought energy. It fills the two denser bodies and has the same shape. Those who understand and control the mental body are no longer afflicted by fear.

**VIJNANA-MAYA KOSHA**

Deeper still lies another body comprised of intellect. It permeates the three denser bodies and assumes the same form. Those who establish their awareness here free themselves from unhealthy thoughts and actions, and develop the self-control necessary to achieve their goals.

**ANANDA-MAYA KOSHA**

Hidden inside it is yet a subtler body, composed of pure joy. It pervades the other bodies and shares the same shape. It is experienced as happiness, delight, and bliss.”

~ Christopher Wallace

“Consciousness is the secret pulsating core of your whole existence, mysterious because it is omnipresent and yet you don’t notice it. It is the most difficult layer of yourself to grasp, because it is the power by which all grasping is done. It is the most difficult to perceive, for it is the power behind all perception. It is the core in the sense that it is the only aspect of yourself that is impossible to objectify.”

- Christopher Wallace

**Philosophy in Practice:**

1. Take a moment to consider each kosha and how you relate to this aspect of yourself. Is it familiar? Comfortable? Strange? Just an idea?

2. Consider your different yoga practices...asana (postures), pranayama (breath exercises), chanting, meditation...how does each practice affect each kosha? How do the practices help integrate/weave together all the ayers?

3. Pick a single practice and do your practice with your attention on one particular kosha. Journal about your experience. Do this for each kosha.
We have not come here to take prisoners,  
But to surrender ever more deeply  
To freedom and joy.

We have not come into this exquisite world  
To hold ourselves hostage from love.

Run my dear,  
From anything  
That may not strengthen  
Your precious budding wings.

Run like hell my dear,  
From anyone likely  
To put a sharp knife  
Into the sacred, tender vision  
Of your beautiful heart.

We have a duty to befriend  
Those aspects of obedience  
That stand outside of our house  
And shout to our reason  
“O please, O please,  
Come out and play.”

For we have not come here to take prisoners  
Or to confine our wondrous spirits,  
But to experience ever and ever more deeply  
Our divine courage, freedom and  
Light.

-Hafiz