



Yoga Nidra

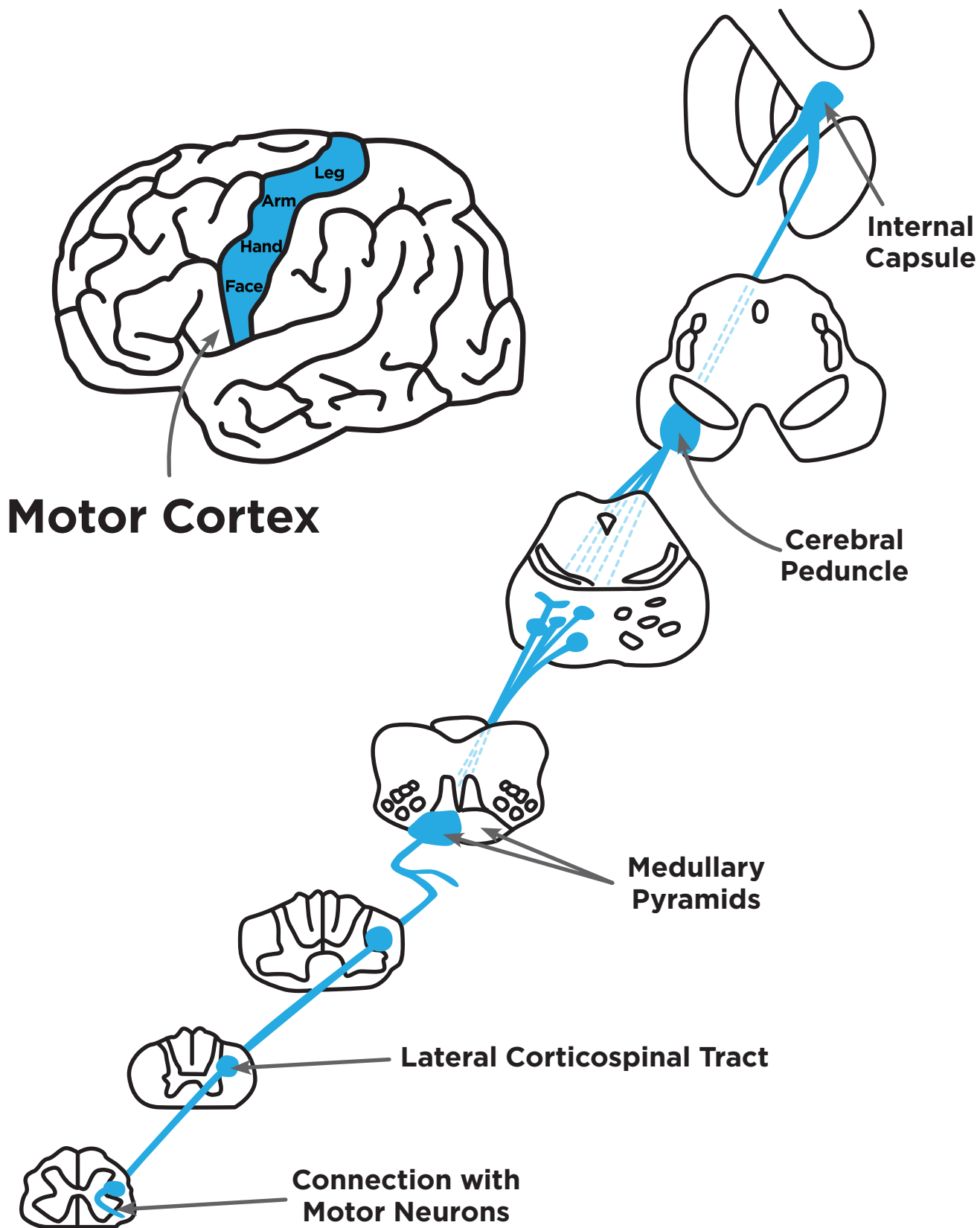
with Rolf Sovik, PsyD

12 Guidelines for Better Sleep

1. Sleep as much as needed to feel refreshed and healthy the following day, but not more. Curtailing the time in bed seems to solidify sleep; excessively long times in bed seem related to fragmented and shallow sleep.
2. A regular bedtime routine and morning waking time strengthen circadian cycling and, finally, lead to regular times of sleep onset.
3. A steady daily amount of exercise probably deepens sleep; occasional exercise does not necessarily improve sleep the following night. Pre-sleep exercise can make falling asleep more difficult.
4. Occasional loud noises (e.g., aircraft flyovers) disturb sleep even in people who are not awakened by noises and cannot remember them in the morning. Sound-attenuated bedrooms may help those who must sleep close to noise.
5. Although excessively warm rooms disturb sleep, there is no evidence that an excessively cold room solidifies sleep. Maintain a comfortable, restful bedroom temperature and atmosphere.
6. Hunger may disturb sleep, so a light snack may help sleep. Avoid high protein or gas-producing foods. Carbohydrates or milk products are suggested.
7. Caffeine in the evening disturbs sleep, even in those who feel unaffected. Avoid caffeine a minimum of 6 hours before bedtime.
8. Alcohol helps tense people fall asleep more easily, but the ensuing sleep is then fragmented and less restful.
9. The chronic use of tobacco disturbs sleep.
10. People who feel angry and frustrated because they cannot sleep should not try harder and harder to fall asleep but should get out of the bedroom and do something different. Return to bed only when sleepy.
11. Turn the bedroom clock away from view. Continued reference to the clock increases anxiety.
12. An occasional sleeping pill may be of some benefit, but chronic use is ineffective for most insomniacs.

Descending Motor Pathway

(Upper Motor Neuron)



Preparing the Body, Breath, and Mind for Relaxation

Step 1: Resting the Body

1. Relaxation requires a transition from one state of consciousness to another.
2. We are learning to facilitate that transition and make it conscious.
3. The first step is to rest the body. Resting requires a restful posture—the rationale for *shavasana* (corpse pose) is just that. We need to make the posture restful.
4. We hold ourselves in a particular way. This changes from moment to moment over days, months, and years. Holding ourselves is normal. To relax means to soften the “grip” in the way we do the holding. Sometimes tightening the grip is the way to relax it. That’s the rationale for tension/relaxation exercises.
5. If you soften the grip you have on yourself, then something must “hold” you. The floor does that. The floor holds you.
6. This leads to stillness—an effortless resting. The first step in relaxation is this shift to an awareness of stillness.
7. Stillness implies that the mind, which is normally responsible for movement, does not initiate movement. It feels the softness and stillness of the body and rests.

Step 2: Effortless Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. Bring your awareness to the flow of breathing.
2. Sense the two great facets of breathing: exhalation and inhalation.
3. Sense how the breath empties and fills, cleanses and nourishes, carries away waste and restores energy.
4. Continue feeling the breath until your nervous system quiets and settles down.
5. Soften the abdomen and sense it rising and falling.
6. Soften the chest and rib cage. Let the rib cage become motionless and transparent. Movements of the abdomen are relaxed and deep.
7. Weave each breath smoothly into the next. At the end of the inhalation, relax and exhale. And at the end of the exhalation, relax and inhale. Let each breath flow into the next by relaxing. Each transition is relaxed and effortless.
8. Continue feeling the breaths until you begin to sense that you are not the breather. Your body breathes. Breathing is effortless and relaxed.
9. You are the witness, feeling and guiding your breath.
10. Relax your mental effort. Continue to feel each breath, but make your breathing effortless.
11. Relax your body; relax your breathing; and as you continue following your breath, relax your mind.
12. Now you are ready to initiate your relaxation method—or simply continue relaxing and watching your breath.

A Yoga Stretching and Strengthening Routine

1. Vertical arm swings (alternately bending your elbows)
2. Horizontal arm swings (alternately crossing in front)
3. Torso twist: with light fists in front of navel; goal posts; globe; soccer ball
4. Overhead stretch
5. *Utkatasana* (chair pose)
6. Abdominal squeeze (exhale—contract your abdomen)
7. Marching
8. Staff pose
9. Neck rolls in hands-and-knees pose
10. “Fire hydrant” hip rotations
11. Downward facing boat
12. Reclining twist and “rock around the clock”

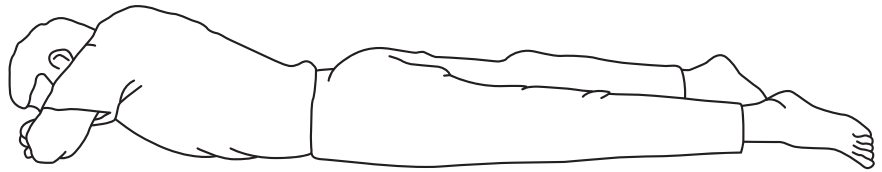
Followed by guided relaxation.

Exercise Without Movement

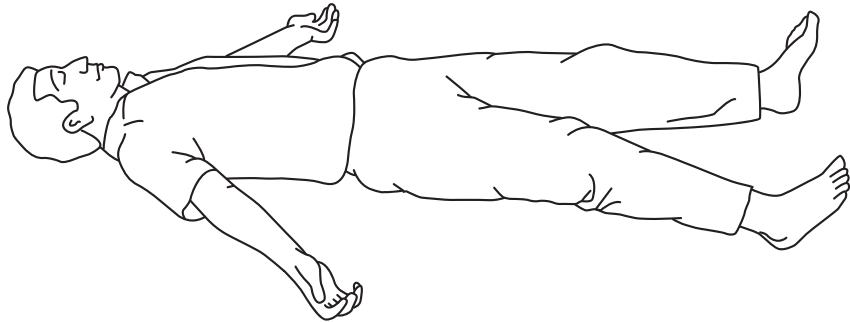
1

Basic Relaxation

Crocodile

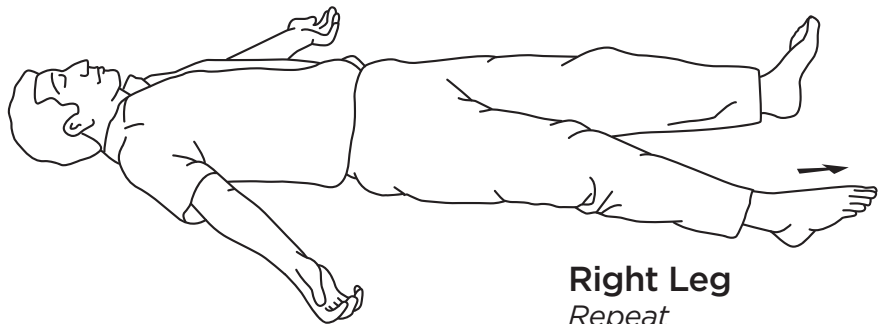


Corpse

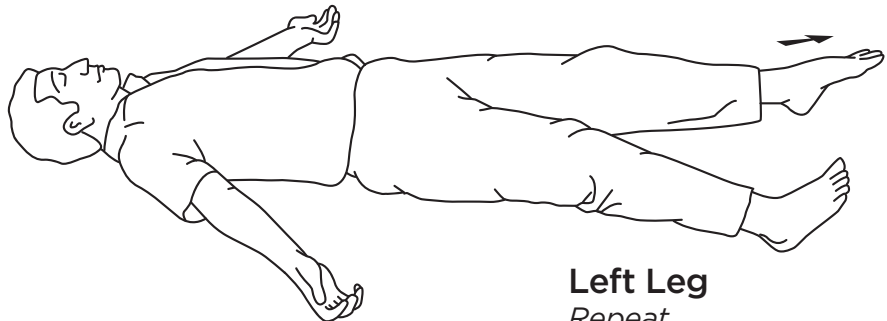


2.1

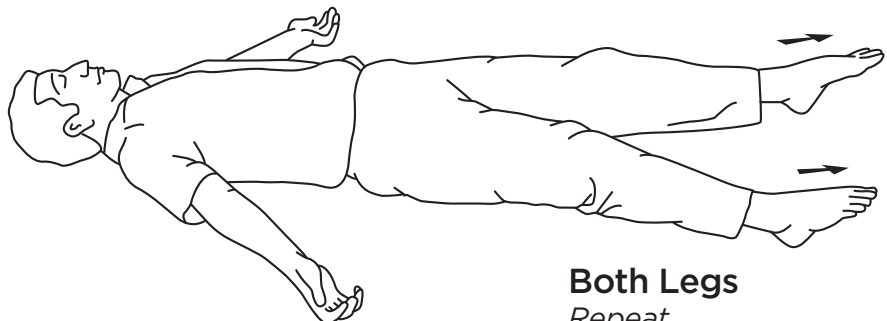
Tension/Relaxation Exercise



Right Leg
Repeat



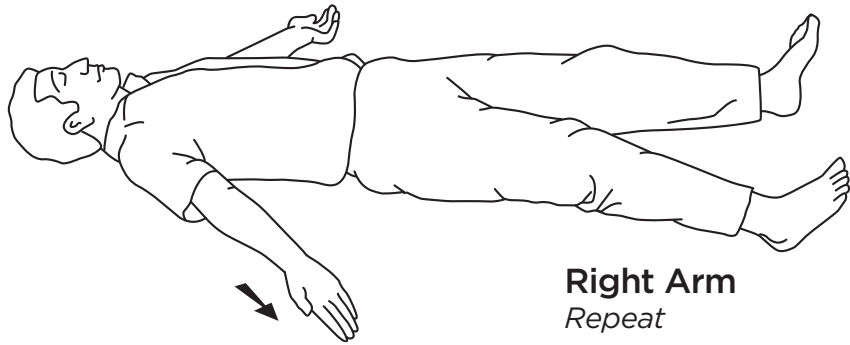
Left Leg
Repeat



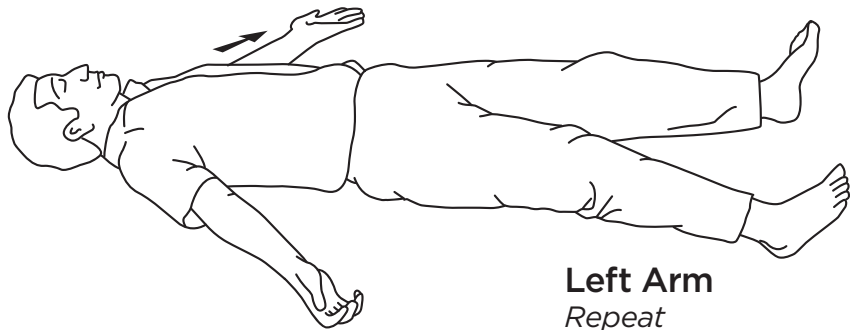
Both Legs
Repeat

2.2

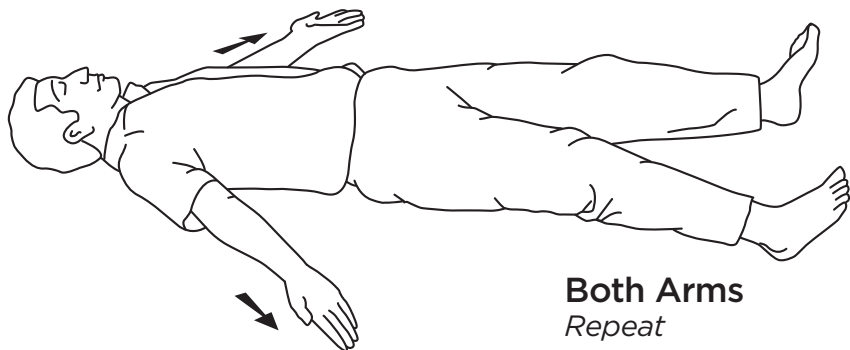
Tension/Relaxation Exercise



Right Arm
Repeat



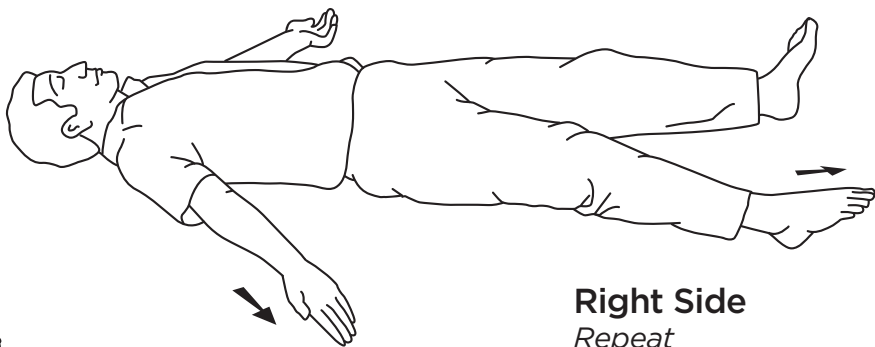
Left Arm
Repeat



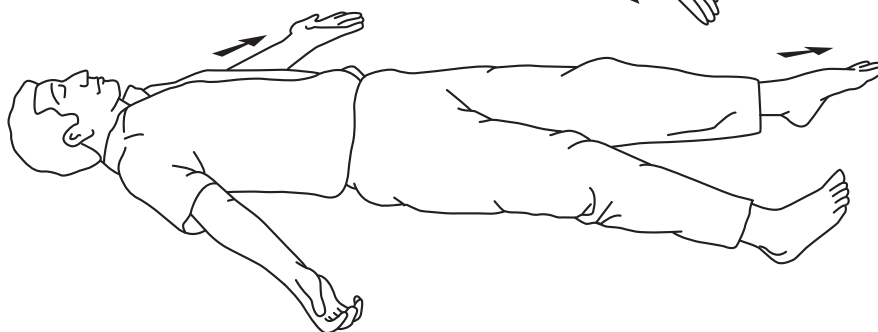
Both Arms
Repeat

2.3

Tension/Relaxation Exercise



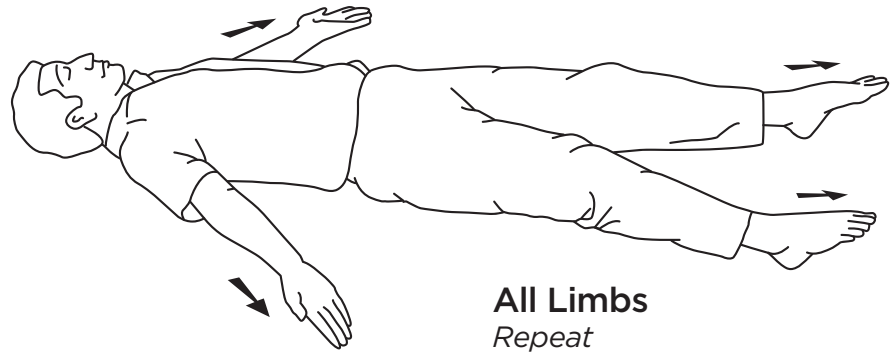
Right Side
Repeat



Left Side
Repeat

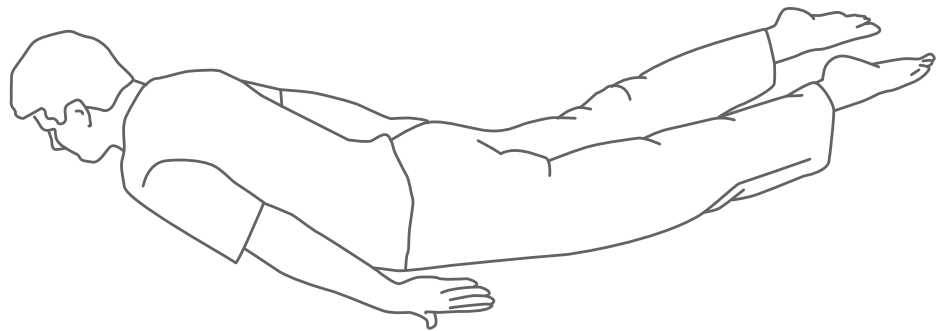
2.4

Tension/Relaxation Exercise



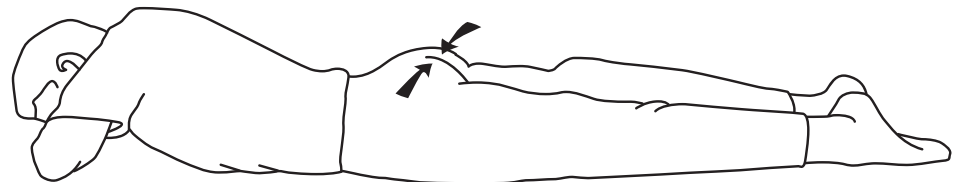
3

Boat Pose
Repeat



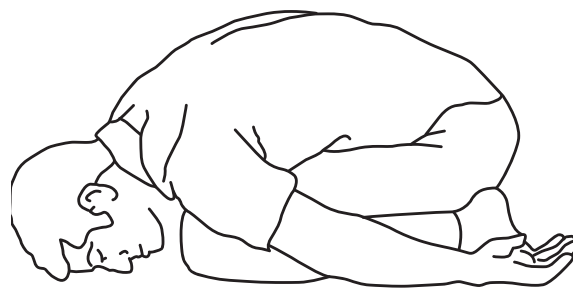
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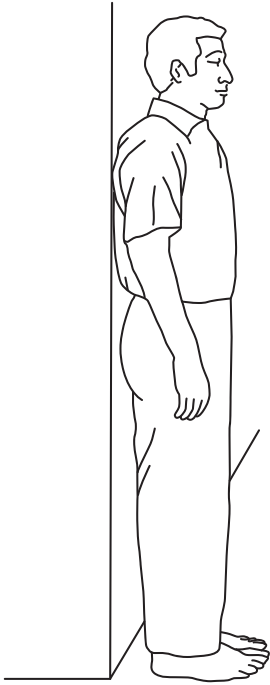
Aswini Mudra
Repeat



5

Child's Pose
5 vigorous breaths

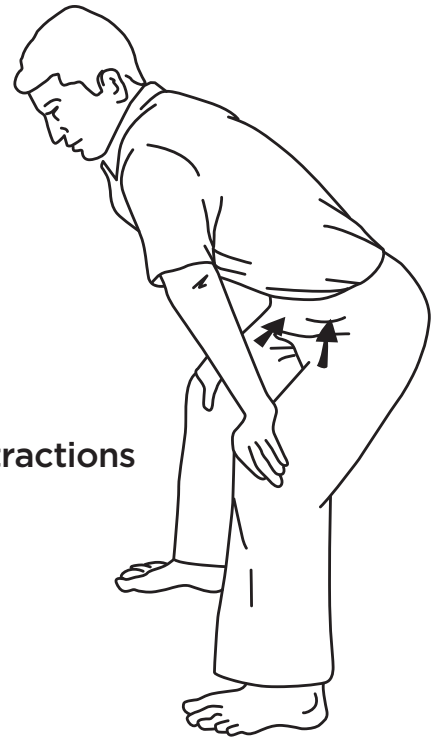




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Standing Tension/Relaxation

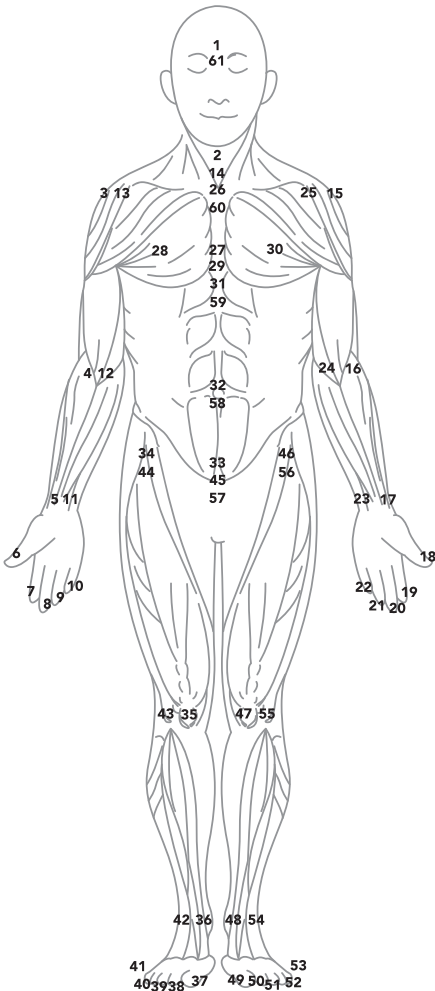
Relax *head to toe*
 Tense *toe to head*
 Relax *toe to head*
 Relaxed *breathing*
 Repeat



7

Agni Sara

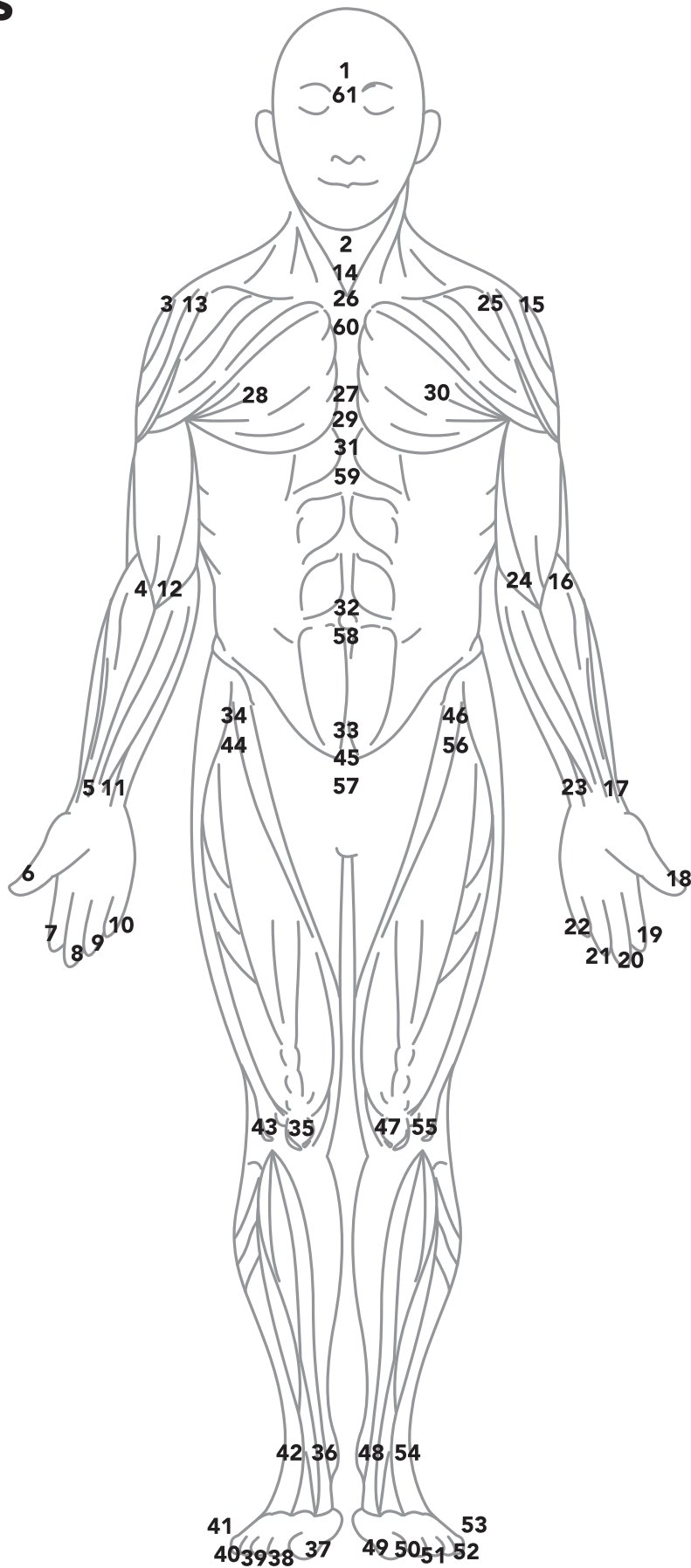
10 to 50
 pelvic contractions



8

61 Points Relaxation (Shavayatra)

61 Points



Systematic Relaxation Instruction

61 Points Exercise with Counting

Adapted from the CD, *Advanced Yoga Relaxations*, by Rolf Sovik, PsyD.

Lie on your back on a firm, flat surface. Support your head and neck with a thin cushion, and use an eye pillow to cover the eyes. Place your feet a little wider than hip distance apart and place the arms alongside you, 8–10 inches away from the torso with the palms turned up. If necessary, place a rolled up blanket under the knees to relieve back strain. Close your eyes and let the body rest.

Sense the sounds around you passing in and out of your awareness. Sense the space around you. Bring your awareness to your body and feel the back of the body contacting the surface beneath you. Let the weight of your body settle down. Sense the front of your body. Feel the outside of your body, the touch of air against your skin, and the touch of your clothing.

Take your awareness inside, and feel the familiar sensations of your body from head to toes. As you bring your attention within, feel the movement of your breathing—the breath moves out and in, again and again. As it moves out, the breath empties, relieving feelings of fatigue and strain. As the breath moves in, it fills you with a sense of well-being.

Bring your attention to the navel region. Soften the muscles there and let your abdomen rise on the inhalation and fall on the exhalation. The abdomen rises as the lungs fill, and falls as the lungs empty. Let the breath flow in a smooth, unbroken stream. Relax your effort. You are the inner witness, feeling the flow of your breathing, yet relaxed.

Gently travel from the crown of your head down the body, relaxing all the way from head to toes, and gradually bring your awareness back through your legs to the base of the spine. Slowly move from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. Sense your whole body, and breathe as if your entire body breathes, cleansing and nourishing with each breath. Let your whole body rest.

Now begin moving through the 61 points. Bring your attention to the first point, the eyebrow center, deep at the core of the head. Rest your attention and visualize a blue, star-like point of light; or instead of visualizing the point, you can feel a star-like point of energy. Settle into this point, relaxing the breath as if it flows there, and do this at each of the 61 points. Rest your awareness, sense the image or feeling of a blue, star-like point of energy, and breathe as if the breath flows at that point.

Eyebrow center	1	Navel center	32
Throat center	2	Pelvic center (between the hip joints)	33
Right shoulder joint	3	Right hip joint	34
Right elbow joint	4	Right knee joint	35
Right wrist joint	5	Right ankle joint	36
Tip of the right thumb	6	Tip of the right big toe	37
Tip of the right index finger	7	Tip of the right second toe	38
Tip of the right middle finger	8	Tip of the right third toe	39
Tip of the right ring finger	9	Tip of the right fourth toe	40
Tip of the right small finger	10	Tip of the right small toe	41
Right wrist joint	11	Right ankle joint	42
Right elbow joint	12	Right knee joint	43
Right shoulder joint	13	Right hip joint	44
Throat center	14	Pelvic center	45
Left shoulder joint	15	Left hip joint	46
Left elbow Joint	16	Left knee joint	47
Left wrist joint	17	Left ankle joint	48
Tip of the left thumb	18	Tip of the left big toe	49
Tip of the left index finger	19	Tip of the left second toe	50
Tip of the left middle finger	20	Tip of the left third toe	51
Tip of the left ring finger	21	Tip of the left fourth toe	52
Tip of the left small finger	22	Tip of the left small toe	53
Left wrist joint	23	Left ankle joint	54
Left elbow joint	24	Left knee joint	55
Left shoulder joint	25	Left hip joint	56
Throat center	26	Pelvic center	57
Heart center (core of the chest)	27	Navel center	58
Tip of the right breast	28	Heart center	59
Heart center	29	Throat center	60
Tip of the left breast	30	Eyebrow center	61
Heart center	31		

Rest and breathe, sensing all these points. Your body is like a cosmic space filled with the light and energy of this field of stars. Your breath is like a wind emptying and filling this space. Lie resting and breathing, allowing your breath to pass in and out without effort. Your mind is filled with the sensation of these points and the feeling of each breath. Relax your body. Relax your breathing, and as you continue to feel the flow of your breath, relax your mind. The space of your mind is filled with the quiet sensations of the breath. You are the inner witness, relaxing your body, breathing, and mind.

Om Peace, Peace, Peace

When you are ready, gently breathe a little more deeply, sensing the space around you. Feel the quietness in that space. Slowly cup your hands and bring your hands over your eyes, opening the eyes into the palms. Roll over to your side and come back to a sitting posture.

75 Breaths Relaxation Exercise

(Shithila Karani)

Rest

Breath diaphragmatically

Breathe:

- 10x to toes
- 10x to ankles
- 10x to knees
- 5x to perineum
- 5x to navel
- 5x to heart
- 5x to throat
- 5x to eyebrow center
- 20x to base of nostrils and back to eyebrow center

Then back down:

- 5x to eyebrows
- 5x to throat
- etc.

Breath Awareness Practice

- Lie on the left side for 10 breaths, as if breathing on the right side.
- Lie on the right side for 10 breaths, as if breathing on the left side.
- Lie on the back for 10 breaths, as if breathing with the whole body.

Yoga Nidra

- Rest at the eyebrow center.
- Rest at the throat (image of a full moon).
- Rest at the heart (no mantra—just the merest awareness of breath).

Yoga Nidra

Preparations:

- Darkness or an eye cover
- Empty stomach
- Properly aligned shavasana posture
- Thin cushion for head and neck
- Shawl or blanket if necessary
- Quiet
- Regular practice of the methods

Steps:

1. Gentle movement
2. Exercise Without Movement (including agni sara)
3. 61 Points and 75 Breaths relaxation exercises
4. Breath awareness practice
5. Yoga nidra

Benefits described by adepts:

- Relaxes nervous system
- Relaxes heart and skeletal muscles
- Gives a deep rest
- Helps reduce sleeping time
- Deepens self-awareness
- Helpful for high blood pressure, gastric or peptic ulcers, circulatory problems, stress related illnesses, and disorders associated with aging

Guidelines:

- Do not fall asleep in the exercise.
If you do, end the practice and start again the next day.
- The breath cleanses and nourishes.
- Follow 75 Breaths with the breath awareness practice (step 4).
- Then begin yoga nidra (step 5).
Start by practicing yoga nidra for not more than 10 minutes.