

Midday Rejuvenation

This is an invigorating practice that will help to enliven your energies.

Three-Part Breath

Range-of-Motion Sequence

Lake Mudra

Knees to Chest

Mountain

Infinity Shoulders

Sun Salutation at the Wall

Crane to Crescent

Tight Rope

Bridge

Knees to Chest

Relaxation

Three-Part Breath

This breath pattern is an invaluable tool for giving your body and mind a quick reset by intentionally guiding your belly, ribs, and chest to expand on the inhalation and fully relax on the exhalation. Sometimes called “diaphragmatic breathing,” it is often used therapeutically to reduce pain, anxiety, and sleep disturbance. The Three-Part Breath practice can be done anywhere and anytime, multiple times a day or at night. While you can do this practice in any position—lying down, sitting, or standing—it’s easiest to learn when you’re lying down or sitting in a reclined position. Try this breath for a few moments (5 to 7 complete rounds) and then notice how you feel.

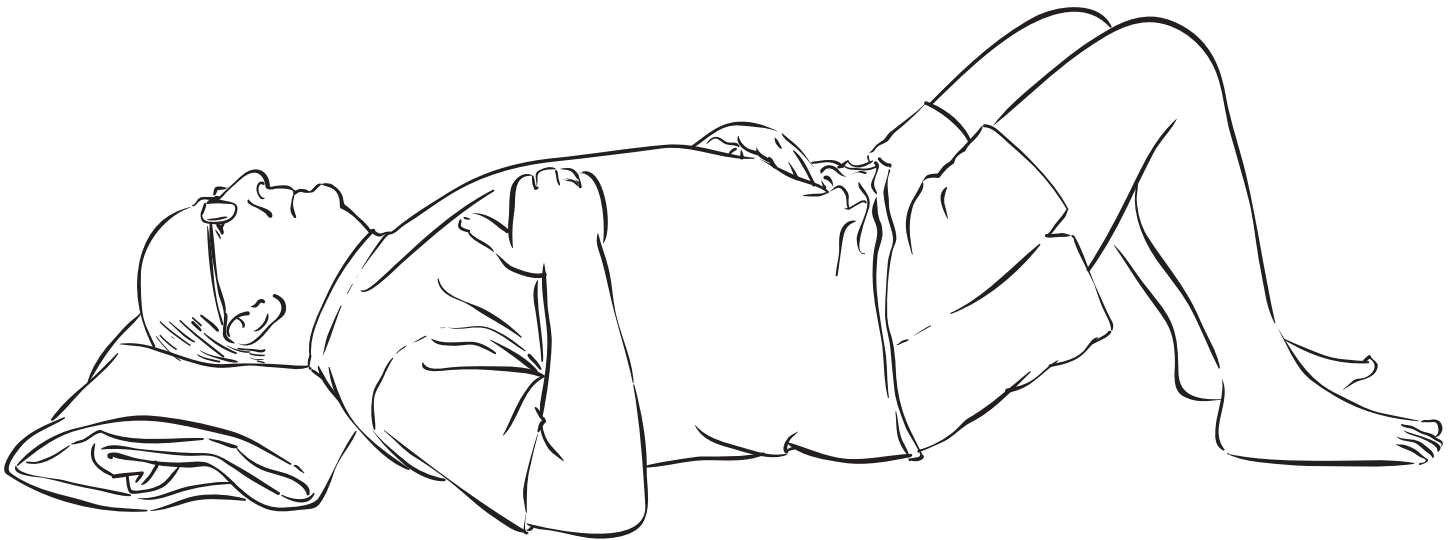


Figure 5.1 Three-Part Breath

Part 1: Rest your hands on your belly, just below the navel. As you take your next breath in, let your belly soften and expand like a balloon. As you breathe out, let your belly sink toward your spine. Repeat 3 times.

Part 2: Rest one hand on your ribs and one hand on your belly (see figure 5.1). With your next inhale, let your belly soften and feel your ribs expand to the left and to the right. As you exhale, let everything sink. Repeat 3 times.

Part 3: Rest the hand that was on your ribs on your upper chest, just below your collarbones. As you breathe in, allow your belly to soften, your ribs to expand, and your upper chest to broaden. As you exhale, let everything go. Repeat 3 times. Spend a few moments here, with one hand on the chest and the other on the belly, exploring this three-part rhythm. Allow this full, easy breath to open and nourish your body.

As you release the Three-Part Breath pattern, take a moment to notice how your body responded, how your emotional heart responded, and how your mind responded to this breathing practice.

Note: Three-Part Breath is *not* meant to be used all the time during your practice. It should be done as a periodic reset for your body and mind.

Range-of-Motion Sequence

Neck Release

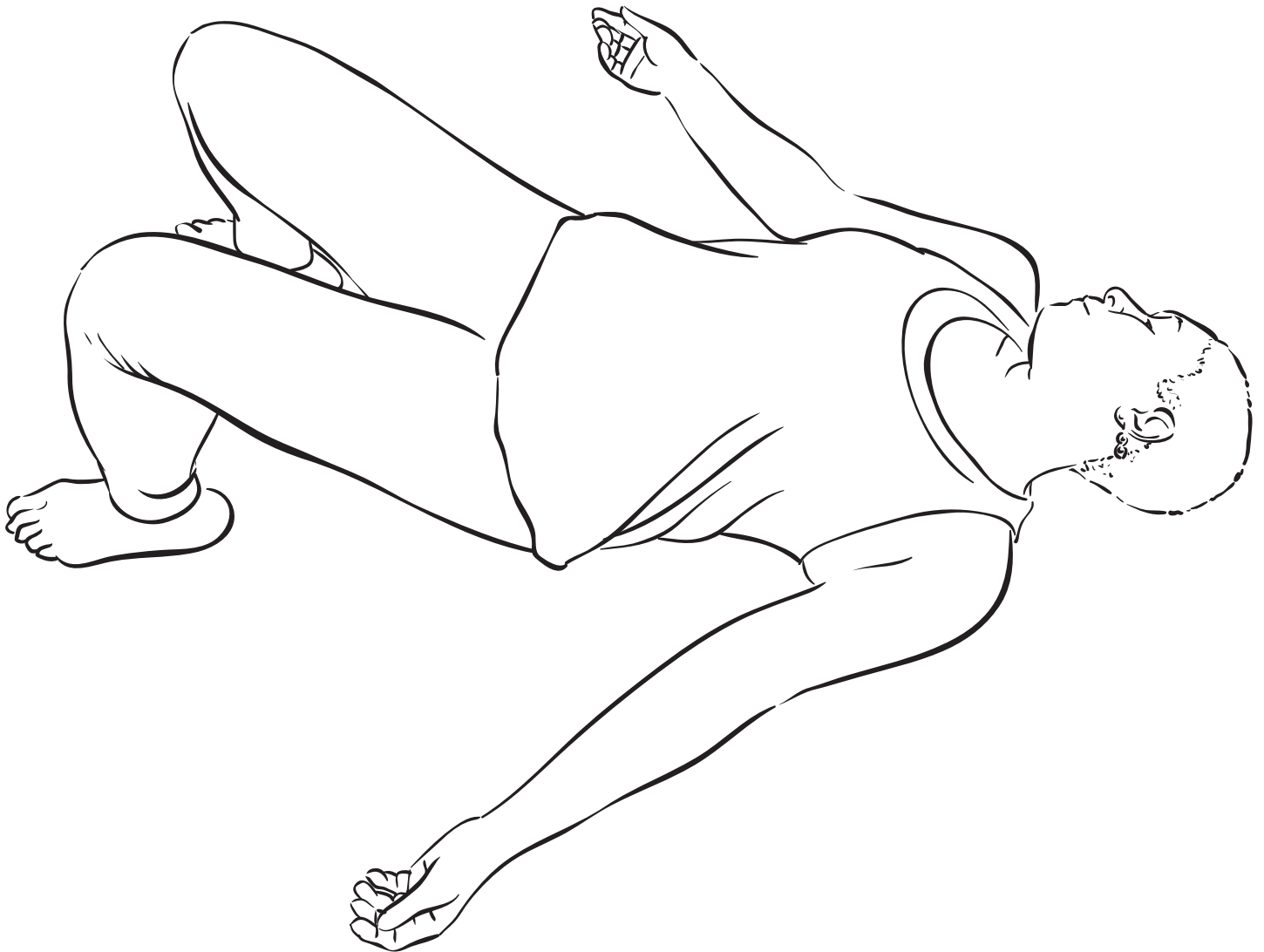


Figure 5.2 Neck Release

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent, soles of the feet flat on the ground, and arms at your sides. If your chin is higher than your forehead, place a folded blanket or towel behind your head so that your chin is at the same level—or slightly below—your forehead. Tune in to your breath.

Movement

Inhale in place.

Exhale and rotate your head to the right, looking over your right shoulder (see figure 5.2). Invite your left shoulder to be a little heavier.

Inhale back to center.

As you exhale, rotate your head to the left, looking over your left shoulder. Invite your right shoulder to be a little heavier.

Repeat this for a few cycles of breath.

Feel free to linger with your head rotated to the right and then left. Close your eyes, if you like, and feel into the sensations.

Remember

- Try not to force your head in one direction or the other.
- Be sure to keep the natural curve in the back of your neck. If you are elevating your head with a folded towel or blanket, make sure it's not so high that your neck flattens.
- Notice, without judgment, any differences between the movement to the right and to the left.

Arms Overhead



Figure 5.3 Arms Overhead

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent and the soles of your feet resting on the ground. Bring your arms alongside your body, palms facing down, and tune in to your breath.

Movement

As you inhale, extend your arms up and overhead so the backs of your hands move toward the ground behind you, or as close to the ground as they will comfortably go (see figure 5.3).

As you exhale, bring your arms back up and return them to the starting position, down along your sides.

Repeat for a few cycles of breath.

Remember

- Synchronize your movement with your breath so that your arms are moving toward your ears as you breathe in and toward your hips as you breathe out.
- Feel free to bend your elbows as much as you need to for comfort.
- Don't worry if the backs of your hands don't reach the ground. Just do the best you can without force or strain.
- Enjoy the feel of your breath.
- Take a moment to rest after you've finished, and try to notice any echoes of movement in your shoulders and arms.

Universal Legs

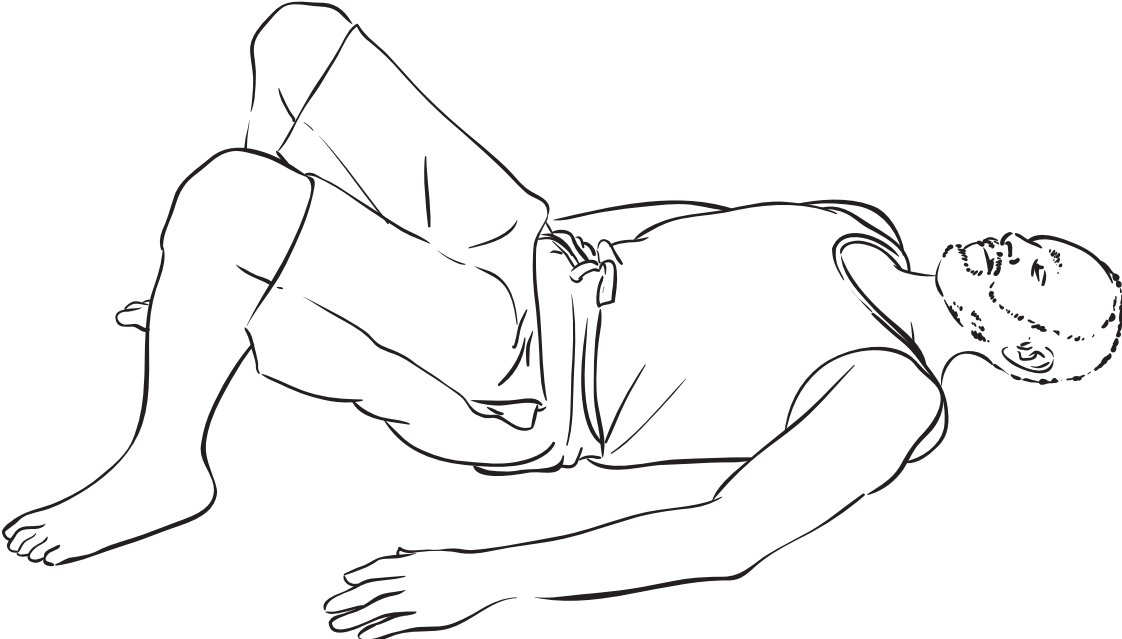


Figure 5.4



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6



Figure 5.7

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet on the ground, and arms at your sides (see figure 5.4).

Movement

Take an easy breath in.

On an exhalation, hug your right knee into your chest—lightly holding your leg behind your right thigh (see figure 5.5).

Stay here for a few breaths. Each time you exhale, draw your right thigh in toward your rib cage.

Next, continuing to hug your leg, imagine that your big toe is a crayon and begin slowly drawing large circles in the air to wake up your ankles. When you're ready, reverse the direction and draw a few more slow, easy circles going the other way. Then relax your foot.

Inhale and extend your right foot up toward the sky, straightening your leg as much as you comfortably can (see figure 5.6).

Exhale and bend your knee, bringing your foot back down by your buttocks.

Repeat this movement for a few breaths—inhaling and extending the leg, exhaling and bending the knee.

Next, keep your leg extended up in the air, with your leg as straight as is comfortable. Extend your foot toward the sky and drop your buttocks down toward the ground.

Keeping your leg extended, flex your right foot so the heel lifts up to the sky and the toes reach toward your nose. Then point your right foot, so your toes reach up to the sky.

Repeat this flexing and pointing a few times.

Relax your foot and draw big circles in the air with your toes, taking your ankles through their full range of motion. Circle a few times in both directions.

Next, bend your right knee and bring your right ankle onto your left thigh (see figure 5.7). Flex your right ankle to maintain healthy alignment in your knee. Linger here, bringing your attention to any sensations that arise and inviting your breath to soften any places where you feel tension.

When you are done, bring your right foot back to the ground, and rest here for a moment, relaxing and releasing. Notice if you feel any difference between your right side that you've just challenged, and your left side, which hasn't had a turn yet.

Now repeat the sequence with the left leg.

When you are done, release both feet to the ground, knees bent, and relax for a few easy breaths.

Remember

- If holding your leg is a strain on your shoulders or arms, use a strap behind your thigh to catch your leg, or rest your arms on the ground as you move your leg through the sequence.
- As always, challenge yourself, but don't strain—just do the best you can.
- Synchronize your movements with your breath—inhale as you straighten your leg, exhale as you bend your knee.
- Avoid holding your breath. Keep it flowing comfortably.
- Notice where you feel the sensation of stretch and movement.
- Notice where you feel the sensation of relaxing and releasing.

Supine Twist

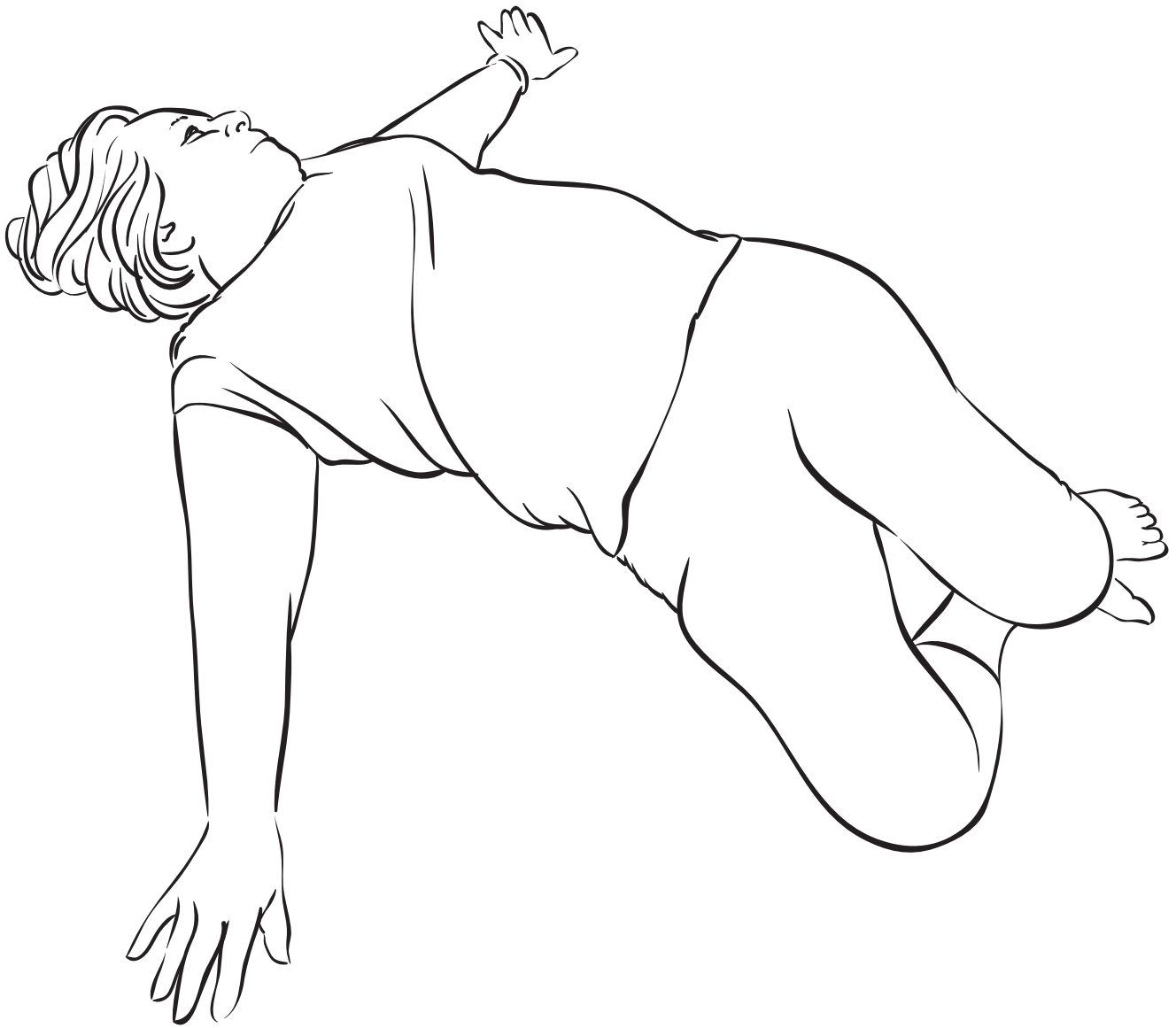


Figure 5.8 Supine Twist

Setup

Lie down with your knees bent and your feet about hip-width apart. Extend your arms out to the sides, palms up or down, whichever feels better.

Movement

Rock your knees from side to side, slowly and gently. Be sure to keep your feet on the ground.

Turn your head in the opposite direction of your knees, keeping your movement and your breath smooth and easy (see figure 5.8).

Repeat a few times.

Linger with your knees dropped to one side and your head rotated to the other. Rest here for a few breaths.

As you inhale, fill your body with breath. Inhale into your hips, waist, ribs, and armpits.

As you exhale, soften into the twist. Let each exhalation be an opportunity to release and let go.

When you are ready, inhale your legs back to center and square yourself off.

Then exhale and linger with your knees dropped to the other side. Rest here for a few breaths.

When you are done, come back to center with bent knees and both feet on the ground, and relax.

Remember

- When resting in the twist, feel free to place a rolled blanket or towel underneath your leg for support if your knee doesn't comfortably reach the ground.
- Do not force your leg to touch the ground.
- Release the weight of your arms and shoulders into the ground as you gently rotate your spine above and below this area.

Lake Mudra

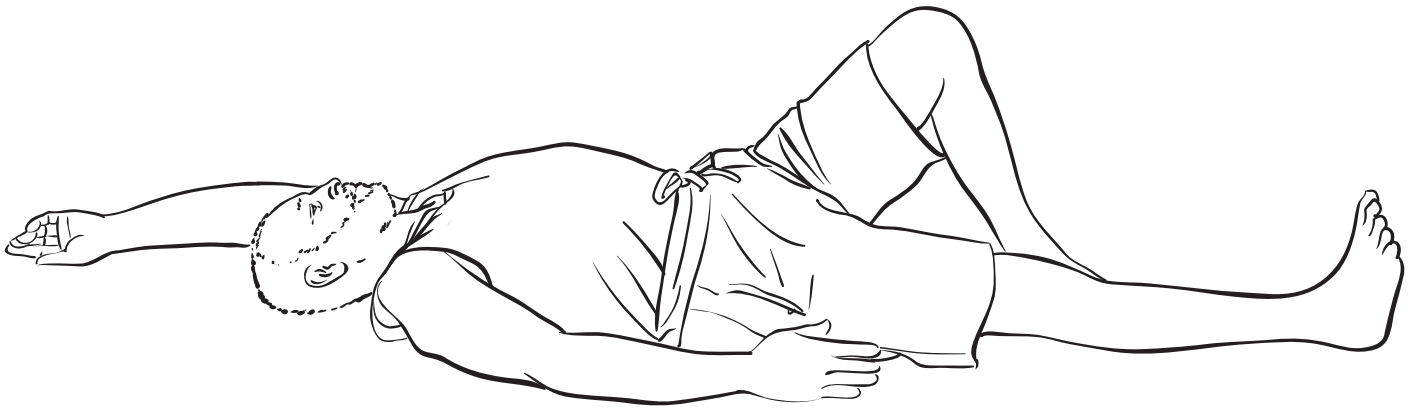


Figure 10.5 Lake Mudra pose

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the ground about hip-width apart. Extend your arms down by your sides with your palms facing your thighs. Tune in to your breath.

Movement

Inhale and extend your left arm up and back toward your ear as you extend your right leg out, hovering a few inches above the ground (see figure 10.5).

Exhale and return your arm and leg to the starting position.

Inhale and extend your right arm and left leg, lengthening across the diagonal.

Exhale and return to the starting position.

Continue with this movement, inhaling to extend your opposite limbs across the diagonal and exhaling to return to the starting position.

Engage your lower belly, drawing it in toward your spine to stabilize your pelvis.

For more challenge, explore pausing in the extended position. Keep your breath fluid. Practice engaging the strength in your center.

Play with this practice for several breaths, challenging your core. When you are ready to rest, bring your arms back along your sides, bend your knees, and bring the soles of your feet to the ground. Pause here and notice how you feel.

Remember

- If your low back feels strained, emphasize drawing your lower belly strongly to the spine and rooting your low back into the ground throughout the movement. You may also slide your leg out along the ground, letting it touch down instead of hovering above the ground.
- Remain curious as to how your body, mind, and heart are responding to the experience.

Knees to Chest

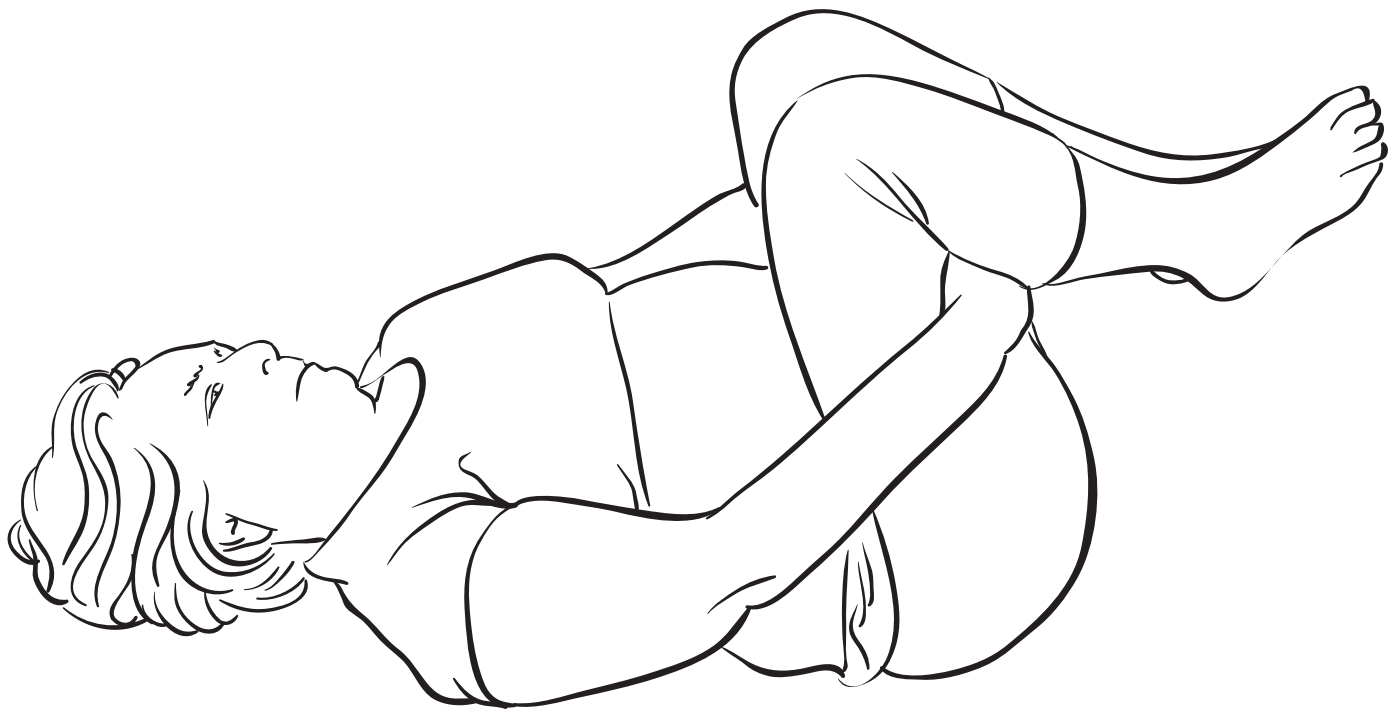


Figure 9.8 Knees-to-Chest pose

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the ground, and arms at your sides. If your chin is higher than your forehead, place a folded blanket or towel behind your head so that your chin is at the same level—or slightly below—your forehead. Tune in to your breath.

Movement

Bring both knees toward your chest as close as is comfortable.

Hold on to your legs behind your knees or on top of your shins (see figure 9.8).

Welcome breath into the back of your body—your tailbone, your love handles, behind your heart.

Linger here for several breaths. You might notice that, as you inhale and fill your body with breath, your thighs move slightly away from your body. As you exhale and release used air, you might hug your thighs in just a little more and feel the sensation of stretch in your low back.

After 3 to 5 breaths, or when you are ready, return the soles of the feet to the ground with your knees bent.

Remember

- If it feels like a strain to hold your legs with your hands, use a strap over your shins or behind your thighs to keep your thighs close to your belly. If this still feels stressful, let your arms rest at your sides. You can also hug one leg at a time if that is more comfortable. If you have knee arthritis, it may be more comfortable to hold behind your thighs instead of holding your shins.
- Feel free to widen your thighs to make room for your belly, if you like.
- Notice how the waves of breath and the waves of sensation come into relationship.
- Discover the various responses—physical, emotional, mental, energetic—to the posture.

Mountain Pose

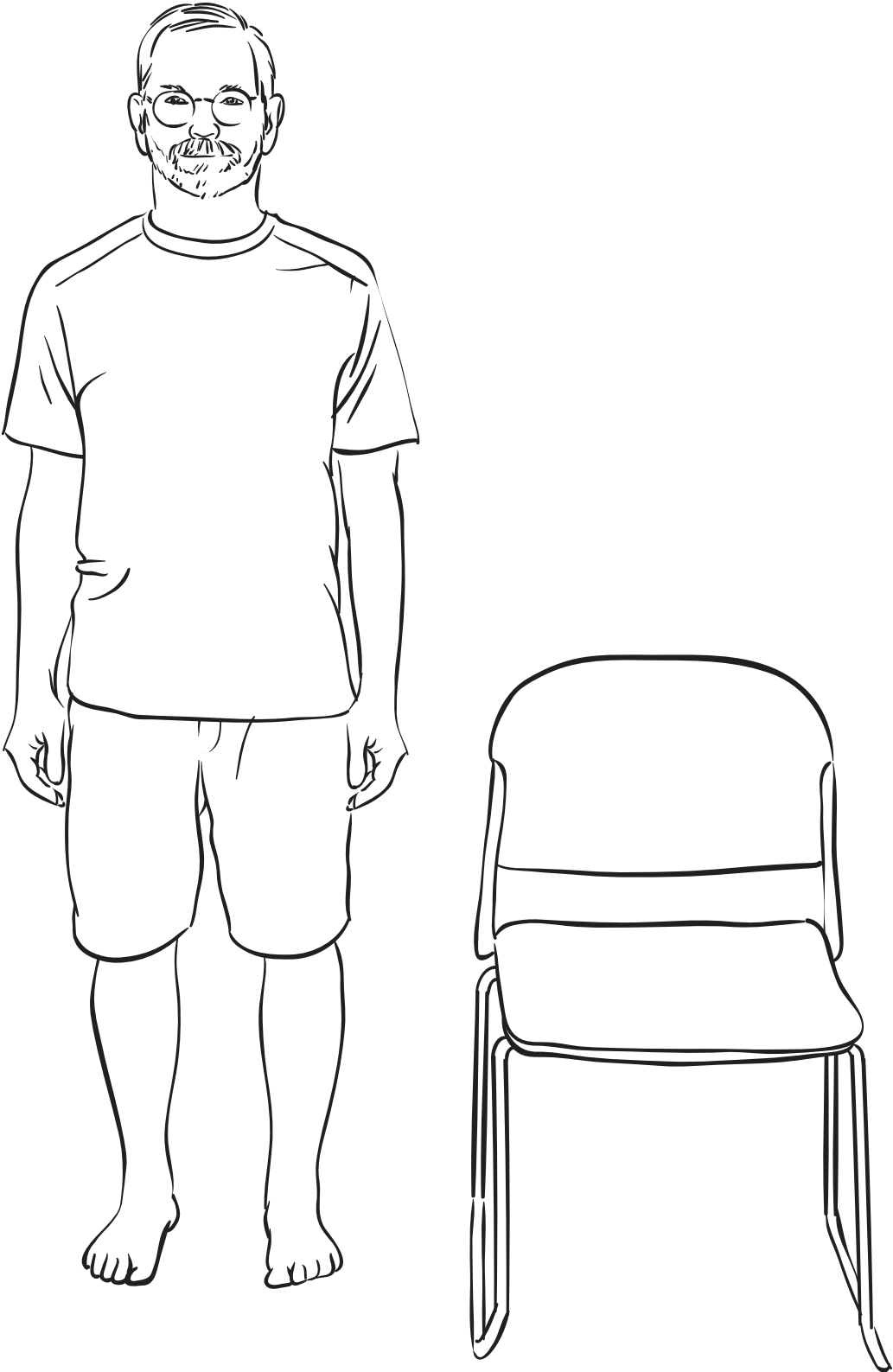


Figure 6.1 Mountain pose

Setup

Stand beside or behind your chair, close enough to lightly touch the back of the chair for support, if needed. Position your feet hip-width apart and snuggle the soles of your feet into the ground.

Movement

Energize your legs, as if you were drawing up energy from the ground.

Release your tailbone down toward the ground, lengthening your lower back.

Gently draw your lower belly in and up, and lift your rib cage up off of your pelvis.

Relax your shoulders down away from your ears, and allow your arms to rest by your sides.

Extend the top of your head up toward the sky, so that your spine elongates.

Let your chin be parallel to the ground, neither lifted nor tucked.

Gaze softly toward the horizon, with your shoulders, throat, and face relaxed (see figure 6.1).

Let the light of your heart shine forward.

Take several slow, easy breaths, filling and emptying your lungs completely.

Remember

- Feel yourself as strong and stable as a mountain.
- Sense the simultaneous downward and upward energies: rooting your legs and lifting your spine.

Infinity Shoulders

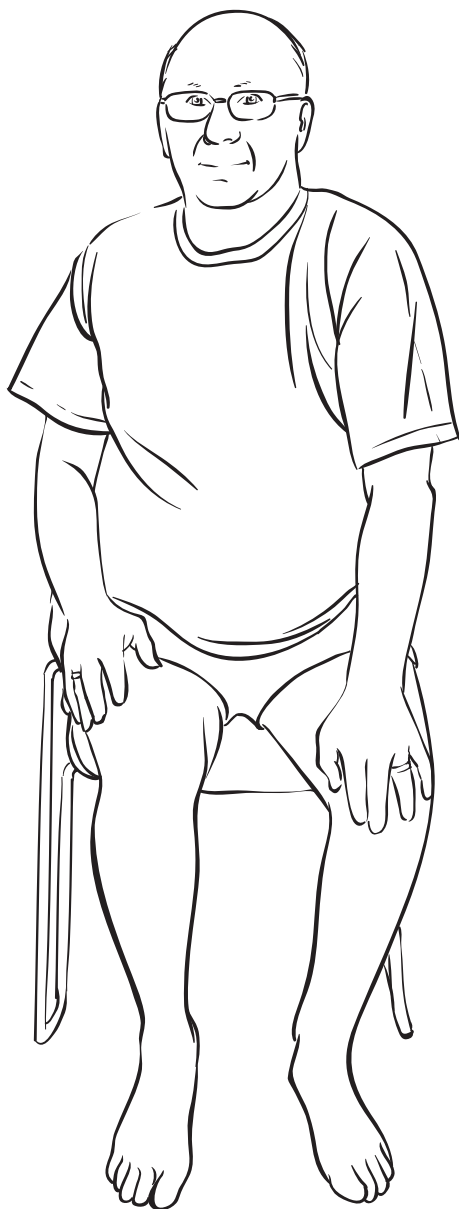


Figure 7.4

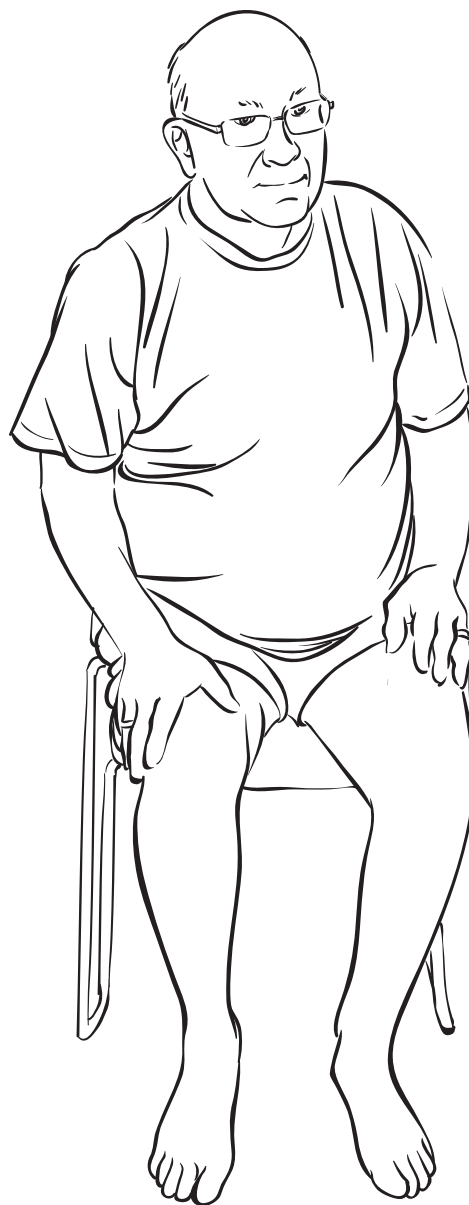


Figure 7.5

Setup

Sit tall in Seated Mountain pose: sitting slightly forward of the back of your chair, feet hip-width apart on the ground (or a prop).

Movement

Rest your hands in your lap.

Bring attention to the top of your right shoulder and lift it up toward your right ear as you drop your left shoulder down toward your hip.

Slide your right shoulder back as you move your left shoulder forward (see figure 7.4).

Drop your right shoulder down toward your hip as you lift your left shoulder toward your ear (see figure 7.5).

Bring your right shoulder forward as you slide your left shoulder back.

Explore making this figure eight, or infinity loop, through your shoulder girdle for several cycles, moving slowly and keeping your breath easy.

Next, change directions for a few cycles.

When you are done, pause and simply notice your experience here and now, sitting in stillness.

Remember

- Notice where the body feels tight and where it feels more fluid.
- Try pausing in a particularly tight or sticky place, and welcome breath into that area.
- Stay present as the subtler sensations fade and the body integrates the experience.

Sun Salutation at the Wall



Figure 11.1

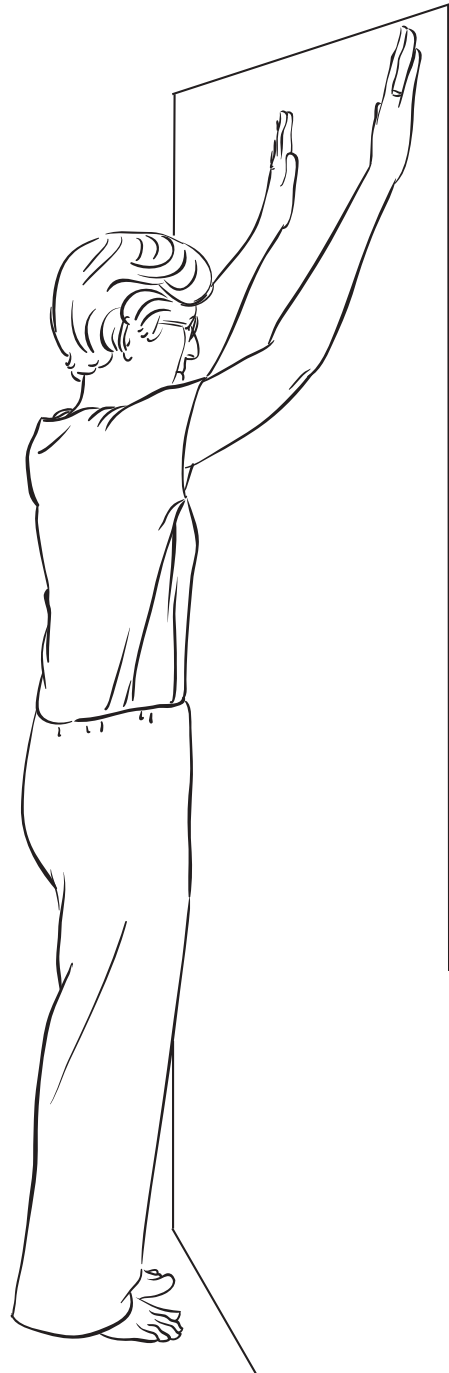


Figure 11.2

Setup

Stand tall facing a wall in Mountain pose, with your toes several inches from the wall (see figure 11.1). Feel the four corners of your feet anchor firmly into the ground. Slightly drop your tailbone, engage your belly, and lift your heart. Feel your breath.

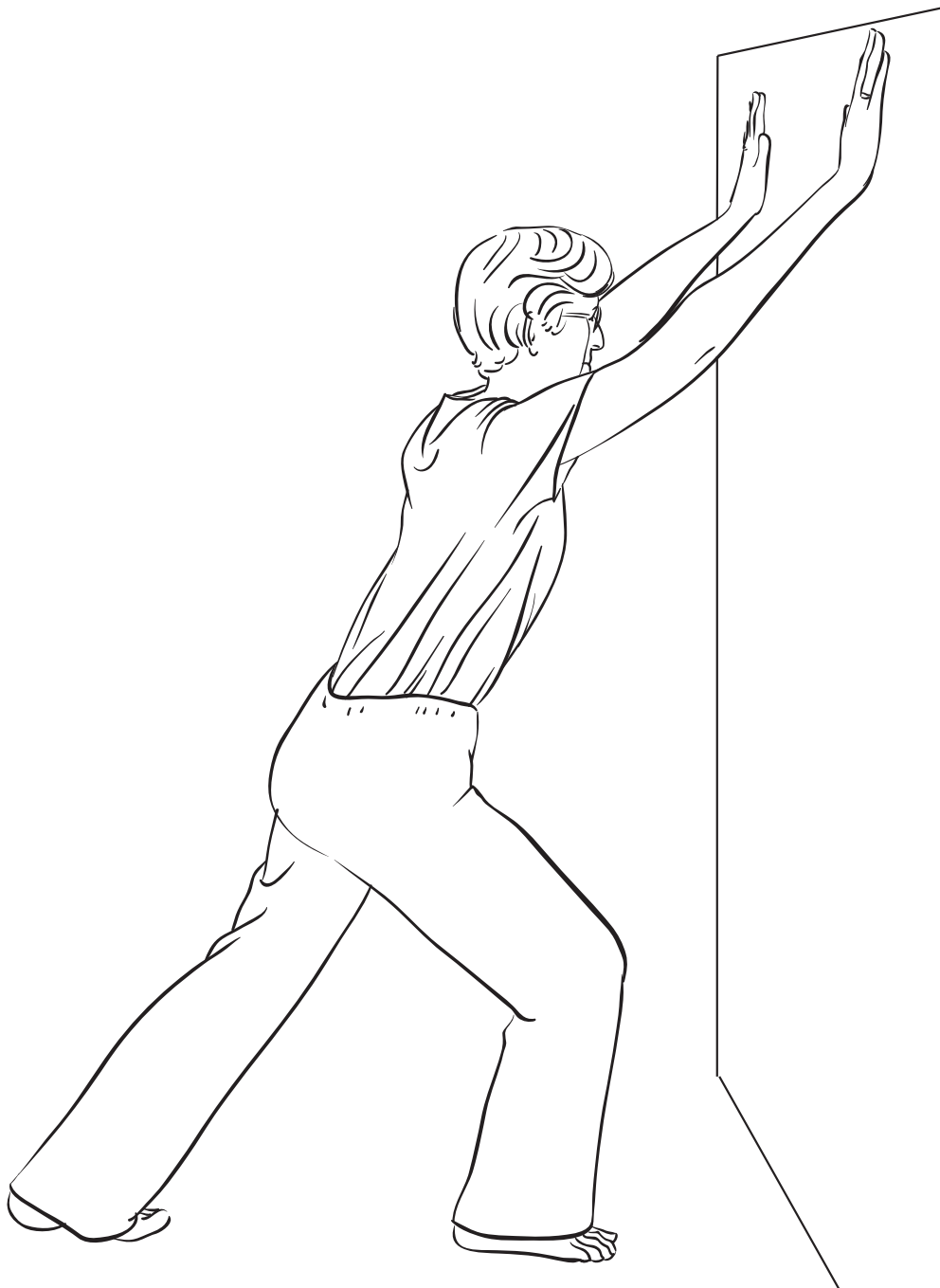


Figure 11.3

Movement

Sweep your arms out to the sides and over your head, landing your palms on the wall shoulder-width apart or as wide as is comfortable (see figure 11.2).

Step your left leg back behind you as far as is comfortable, placing the ball of your foot on the ground and keeping the heel lifted.



Figure 11.4

Bend your right knee, making sure that it does not bend so far forward that you can't see your toes (see figure 11.3).

Step your left foot forward a couple of inches.

Step your right foot back beside your left.

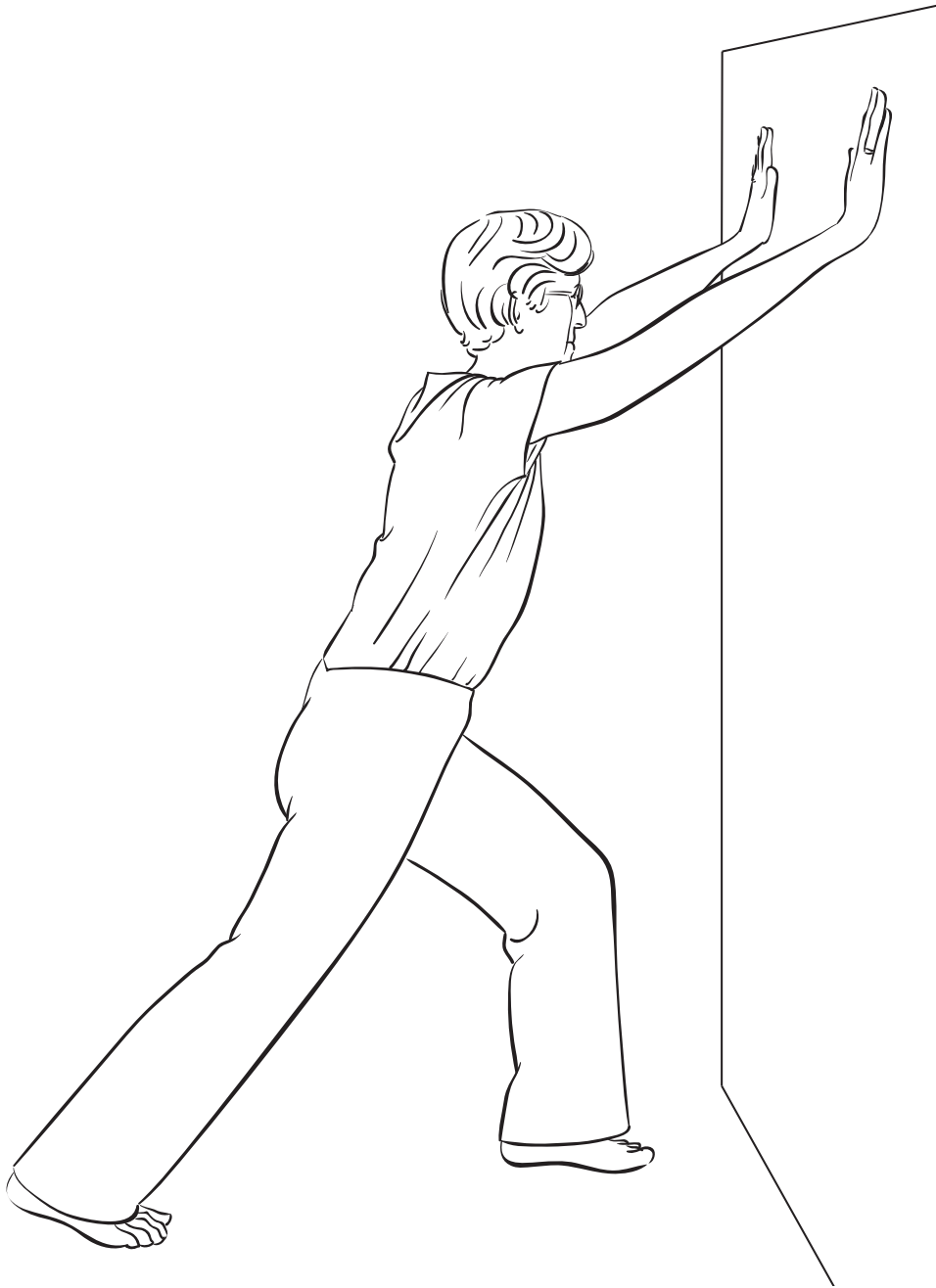


Figure 11.5

Bend your knees and extend your tailbone to the wall behind you, sliding your hands down the wall (keeping them shoulder-width apart) so you can lengthen your spine (see figure 11.4).

Step your left foot forward toward the wall and slide your right foot back a few inches.

Bend your left knee so it is over your ankle and aligned with your toes.

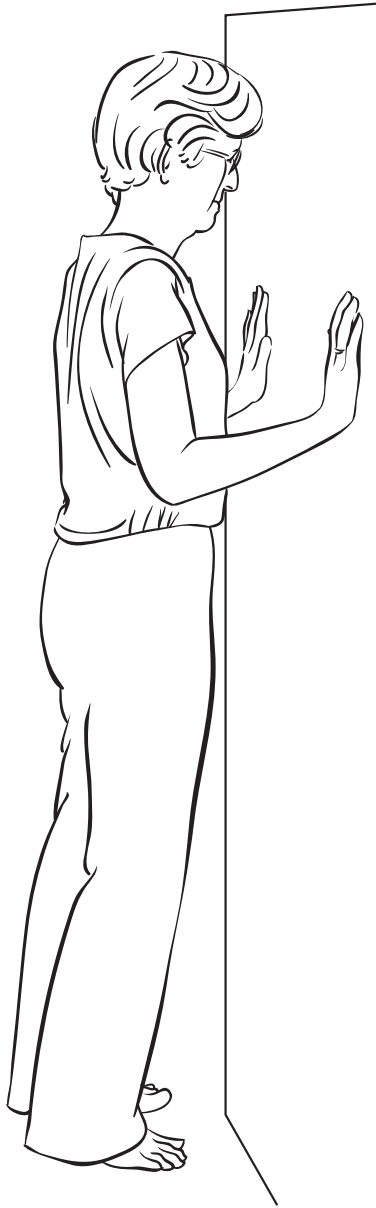


Figure 11.6



Figure 11.7

Slide your arms back up the wall, still shoulder-width apart (see figure 11.5).

Step your right foot forward by the left and slide your hands down the wall until they are in front of your ribs (see figure 11.6).

Engage your belly and hug your elbows toward your body. Invite your shoulders back and down, and tilt your tailbone toward the ground.

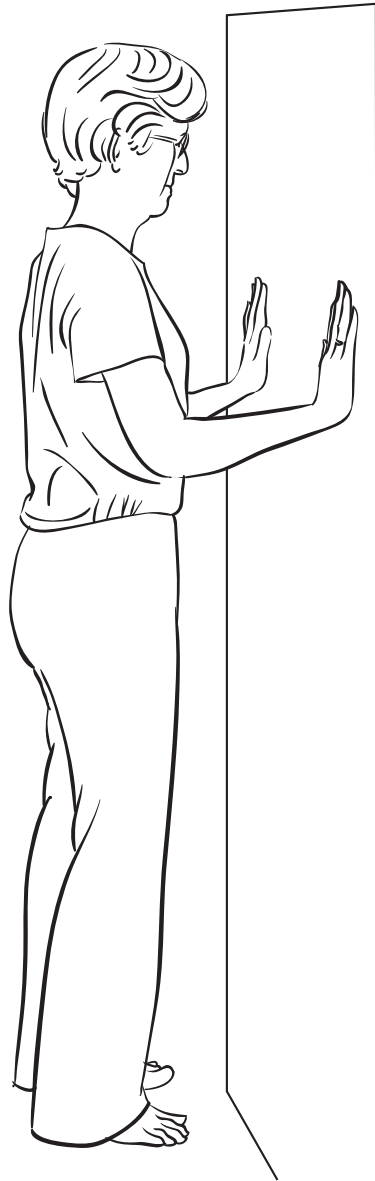


Figure 11.8

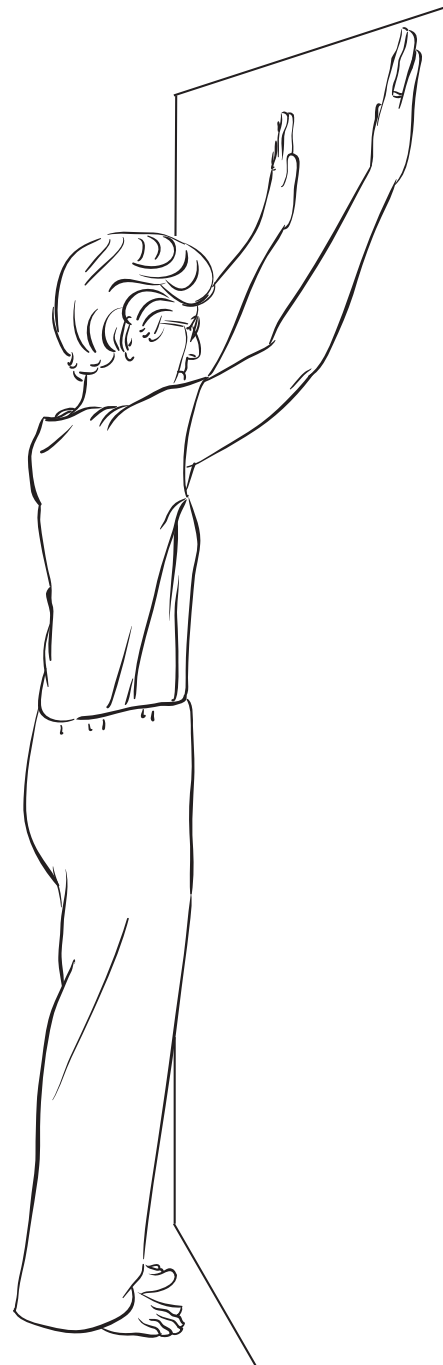


Figure 11.9

Bend your elbows to “lower” your straight body toward the wall, as if lowering into a push-up (see figure 11.7).

Press the wall away with your hands (see figure 11.8) and slide your palms back up the wall as high as is comfortable (see figure 11.9).

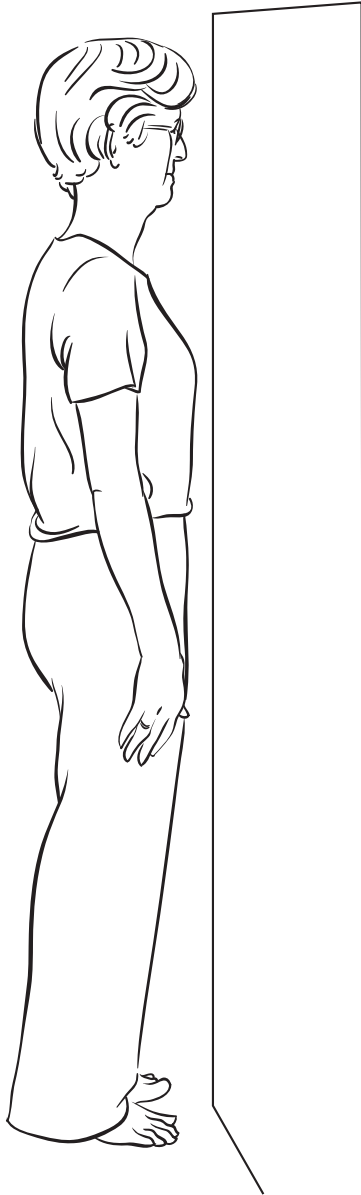


Figure 11.10

Sweep your arms out and down and return to Mountain pose (see figure 11.10).

Feel free to continue for several more cycles of Sun Salutation at the Wall.

Remember

- Keep your bent knee over your ankle and aligned with your second toe to avoid straining your knee.
- Practice keeping your spine long when you extend your tailbone to the back wall. If you feel your spine curving in this position, bend your knees more deeply.
- Pause between rounds and take an easy breath. Feel the ground below you and the sky above you. Find the strength of a mountain.
- Become aware of the various responses of your body, mind, and heart to this sequence.

Caution

- Avoid bending your knee so deeply that it goes beyond your toes. If you can't see your toes when you look down, bend your knee less.
- Avoid pushing your back heel to the ground. Rather, let the heel stay lifted.

Crane to Crescent



Figure 11.11



Figure 11.12

Setup

Stand beside a chair close enough that you can hold on to the back of the chair for support, if necessary. Stand tall in Mountain pose.



Figure 11.13



Figure 11.14

Movement

Bring your palms together in front of your chest.

Shift your weight onto your right leg.

Inhale and lift your left heel, ball of the left foot on the ground, as you extend your arms out to the side.

Exhale and return to Mountain pose with palms together in front of your chest.

Repeat this for a few breaths, building strength and balance in your right leg.

Next, inhale and lift your left knee up so your left foot leaves the ground as you extend your arms out to the side. This is Crane pose (see figure 11.11).

Exhale and return to Mountain pose with palms together in front of your chest.

Continue this movement pattern for a few breath cycles.

Next, inhale and lift your left knee up as you extend your arms out to the side.

This time, exhale and step your left foot behind you as you lift your arms forward and up (see figure 11.12).

On your next inhalation, bring your left knee forward and extend your arms to the sides in Crane pose (see figure 11.13).

Exhale and return to Mountain pose with palms together in front of your chest.

Continue for several breaths.

For more challenge, step your left foot a bit farther behind you and bend your right knee as you sweep your arms forward and up. This is Crescent pose (see figure 11.14).

Inhale and bring your left knee forward and your arms out to the side in Crane pose.

Exhale and return to Mountain pose with palms together in front of your chest. Pause for a few breaths, simply breathing.

Repeat on the other side: stand on your left leg and move your right leg.

Remember

- Feel free to add the breath pattern after you become familiar with the sequence.
- Explore the variation that is challenging but does not cause strain.
- Use the chair for support if your balance is unsteady.
- Keep your breath fluid.

Tight Rope



Figure 8.10 Tight Rope pose

Setup

Stand beside your chair close enough to lightly hold on to the back of the chair for support. Position your feet hip-width apart, and feel the ground beneath your feet.

Movement

Stand tall in Mountain pose.

Inhale your arms out to the sides of your body so that they are extended at about shoulder height.

Exhale and soften your shoulders, your elbows, and your hands.

Focus your gaze at a point on the horizon.

Shift the weight of your body into your left leg, keeping your hips steady.

Take a baby step forward with your right foot and check in to see how balanced you are.

If this feels steady, move your right foot toward your left foot.

If you still feel balanced, step your right heel directly in front of your left foot, as if you are walking on a tight rope (see figure 8.10).

Shift your weight forward into your right foot, lifting your left heel.

Shift your weight back into your left foot.

Practice slowly shifting your weight from your front foot to your back foot.

For further challenge, explore stepping your right foot behind your left foot.

Continue practicing this weight shifting, keeping your breath flowing comfortably.

When you're ready, step back into Mountain pose.

Then repeat this sequence by stepping the left foot forward first.

When you're done, step back into Mountain pose and breathe comfortably.

Remember

- Check in with your balance at each step before you progress to the next step.
- Always feel free to rest when necessary.
- Notice all of the small changes inherent in balance.

Caution

- If balancing with one foot in front of the other is too challenging, widen your stance as if you were “walking a plank” rather than a tightrope.

Bridge



Figure 9.7 Bridge pose

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place your feet flat on the ground and hip-width apart. Rest your arms at your sides, palms down. Tune in to your breath.

Movement

Inhale and root down with your feet and arms as you lift your hips up off the ground (see figure 9.7).

Exhale and release your hips back down.

Continue with this easy lifting and lowering: inhale your hips up and exhale them down. Try to keep your legs parallel—avoid letting your knees “knock” in or splay out.

For more challenge, stay in the “up” position for a few slow, full breaths.

When you are done, return your hips to the ground and rest.

Remember

- Be sure your head is properly aligned: your chin should be in line with the little “notch” in your collarbones.
- Bring your chin slightly lower than your forehead, but don’t flatten your neck. Be sure to keep the natural curve in your neck so that there is a little space behind it.
- Keep your breath flowing. Avoid holding your breath.
- Only lift your hips as high as comfortable. Your strength will build over time with practice.

Knees to Chest



Figure 9.8 Knees-to-Chest pose

Setup

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the ground, and arms at your sides. If your chin is higher than your forehead, place a folded blanket or towel behind your head so that your chin is at the same level—or slightly below—your forehead. Tune in to your breath.

Movement

Bring both knees toward your chest as close as is comfortable.

Hold on to your legs behind your knees or on top of your shins (see figure 9.8).

Welcome breath into the back of your body—your tailbone, your love handles, behind your heart.

Linger here for several breaths. You might notice that, as you inhale and fill your body with breath, your thighs move slightly away from your body. As you exhale and release used air, you might hug your thighs in just a little more and feel the sensation of stretch in your low back.

After 3 to 5 breaths, or when you are ready, return the soles of the feet to the ground with your knees bent.

Remember

- If it feels like a strain to hold your legs with your hands, use a strap over your shins or behind your thighs to keep your thighs close to your belly. If this still feels stressful, let your arms rest at your sides. You can also hug one leg at a time if that is more comfortable. If you have knee arthritis, it may be more comfortable to hold behind your thighs instead of holding your shins.
- Feel free to widen your thighs to make room for your belly, if you like.
- Notice how the waves of breath and the waves of sensation come into relationship.
- Discover the various responses—physical, emotional, mental, energetic—to the posture.

Relaxation

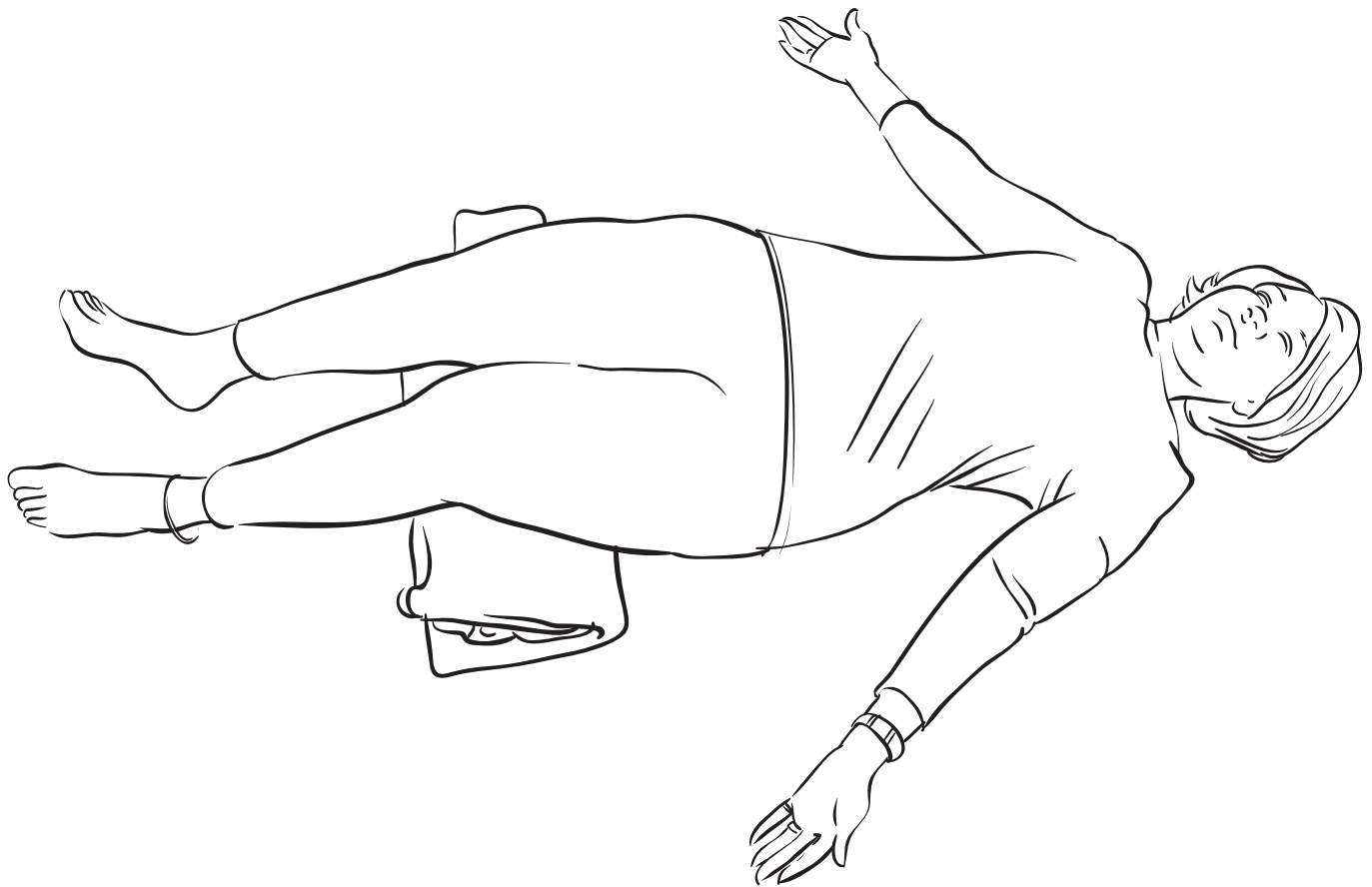


Figure 5.9 Relaxation pose

Setup

Rest with your legs straight or knees bent, whichever is most comfortable. Feel free to place a rolled blanket or towel under your knees. Let your hands relax by your sides, palms turned up or down, whichever position allows your shoulders to feel the most at ease (see figure 5.9). Close your eyes and give over the weight of your body to the ground.

Movement

Take a full breath in and let it go with a sigh.

Again, take a full breath in and release with a sigh.

One last time, take a full breath in and exhale with a sigh.

Become aware of the pool of sensation that is your body.

Feel the sensations of your feet, your legs, your pelvis, your torso, your hands, your arms, your shoulders, your neck, and your head.

Sense into your body as a whole, greet your body with kindness, and let it be.

Become aware of the waves of your emotional heart.

Sense the joy, the fear, the contentment, the anger, the sadness, the love.

Feel the currents of your heart all at once, greet your heart with kindness, and let it be.

Become aware of your thinking mind and the tendencies of your thinking mind.

Recognize the remembering, the forgetting, the liking, the disliking, the comparing, the evaluating, and the creativity.

Notice all of the tendencies of your thinking mind at once, greet your thinking mind with kindness, and let it be.

For now, the invitation is to simply *be*.

Remember

- The “undoing” is as important as the doing—learning how to let go and be still is as essential as learning how to move. Give yourself plenty of time for relaxation.
- Consider setting a timer for 5 or 10 minutes—or however long you want to practice Relaxation pose—so you can completely surrender to the experience.