

## Yoga Exercises Relieve Stress: Instruction Class in Print

Elizabeth Stiles

A heavy course load, work, deadlines and winter weather can all contribute to the stress that most of us feel acutely this time of year. Add to all of that after Christmas blues, broken New Year's Resolutions, and the freshman fifteen and nothing looks very good right now. When we feel overwhelmed and out of control, we can take control back. The following yoga moves, performed a few minutes every day, can help you to recommit to living a better life. So, let's get started!

First, get onto all fours and sit your hips on your heels. Keep your arms stretched out straight in front of you along the floor. Release your forehead to the floor. This is called "extended child's pose." Take several deep breaths through your nose while remaining here. Keep your eyes closed and your face muscles relaxed. This pose helps us to quiet our minds and turn our focus inward.

After several deep breaths in extended child's pose, come back onto all fours. As you inhale, tilt your tailbone to the ceiling. At the same time, roll your shoulders down your back. Look up at the ceiling. This is called "cow pose." When you exhale, round your back towards the ceiling (like a Halloween cat). Reach your nose toward your bellybutton. This is called "cat pose." From here, alternate by inhaling into cow pose and exhaling into cat pose. This will warm up and work your core muscles.

Breathe through cow and cat at least five times. From there, come into a neutral spine (or flat back). Curl your toes into the floor and, on your next exhale, lift your tailbone up towards the ceiling. If you are doing this pose correctly, you will look like an upside down V, or a dog getting up from a nap. It is called "downward Facing dog pose".

All your weight should be evenly distributed between your hands and your feet. Both hands and feet pushup to your tailbone. Your shoulders should be rolled away from your ears, and your neck should be relaxed. Your knees should be slightly bent, so that your spine can stay in its natural alignment. This pose works all the muscles of your body. It strengthens your arm muscles, your abdominal muscles, and your leg muscles (including gluteus, thighs and calves). It is a strengthening pose. Take five to eight slow controlled breaths as you hold it.

Once you have finished, release back onto all fours, sit back on your knees and come into a kneeling position. Make a fist and place the flat part of your fist into the small of your back, making sure your elbow is pointing straight behind you. Do the same with your other hand. As you inhale, open your chest. As you exhale, use your fists to push your hips forward as far as is comfortable. With each inhale, open your chest towards the ceiling more. With each exhale, push your hips a little further forward. Do this five to eight times. This is called "camel pose". This pose is good for improving posture, strengthening back muscles, and creating flexibility.

To release from this pose, keep your fists in the small of your back and, leading with your chest, maneuver back to child's pose. Take a few deep breaths, then use your hands to push up onto all fours, and bring your legs out in front of you, keeping your knees bent and the soles of your feet on the floor. Sit up tall. Hold onto your legs. As you inhale, open your chest. As you exhale, lift both feet off the floor so that they are parallel with the floor. This is called "boat pose."

Hold this pose for five deep breaths, making sure not to round through the back. This pose will strengthen the muscles of your stomach and your inner thighs. After all your breaths are complete, release your soles to the floor and bring your hands behind you with your fingertips pointing towards you. On your next inhale, lift your hips up into the air by pressing all your weight into your hands and feet. Really work to create a "flat table" across your mid-section. This is called "table-top pose." It is a complementary pose to boat pose. Take a few deep breaths.

Once you release your hips back to the floor, bring yourself into a seated, cross-legged position. Sit erect. Take a deep inhale, and as you exhale, twist to one side (staying erect). As you breathe in, you should get taller. As you breathe out you should twist deeper. This kind of twist aids digestion, making the process more efficient. Take eight deep breaths, and then release back to the center and repeat on the other side.

Now it is time for the most important part of this, and every yoga practice, "final relaxation." Lay down on your back and pretend you are taking up an entire bed yourself. Close your eyes and focus all of your attention on your breathing. Stay here for at least five minutes. This is a chance for your body to be busy relaxing.

So, let all your other thoughts and demands go and just lie still, doing nothing, for as long as you like. Enjoy!

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## Review: Performance by African Resurrection



Tamara Clark

The audience was waiting in anticipation for African Resurrection to arrive. Rene Kauder, Student Activities Coordinator, paced back and forth debating on whether or not to cancel the show when a four door Honda with a flat tire came cruising onto the parking lot beside the General Studies building. Getting a flat tire didn't stop them from performing.

Three women in colorful dresses called laapaa came into the auditorium. Their names were Malaika Coopor, "Momma T" Tremontenia, and Rosa. O Rosa was also wearing a head piece known as galei and a cowrie shell belt. These shells dangling from her belt used to be the African currency.

African Resurrection was founded seven years ago by Malaika Coopor. They are from the Baltimore area. She expressed how one has to go back in order to go forward - going back was to our heritage. The name for this is Sankofa. Malaika had many educational examples that she had shared with us.

There were four drummers: Salim Ajanku, Zakiya, Duane Hinton, and Jabari. The drums tell the dancers when to start, change step and when to stop. The types of drums were the djembe, the kikani, the songba, and the dun dun.

Salim began drumming at the age of three. He played the

djembe drum. Salim said that the djembe is played in West Africa and is made of wood, rope, metal rings and goat skin. It makes three sounds; tone, slap, and bass. He referred his sequence (tone, tone - slap, slap, - bass, bass) as the drum's alphabet. The dun dun is usually made of three drums. The one present that night was made of two drums called the songba and the kikani. All of the drums are played in a polyrhythmic fashion.

Malaika said that the drums represent the family. The beats relate to the mother. She pointed out that the first noise a baby will hear is the mother's heartbeat. The "mother drum" holds the rhythm together. The "father drum" tells the drummers and the dancers when to go left, right, stop, start, or change. The remaining two drums are the kids. Each kid is different. The "father drummer", Salim, wore a shirt referred to as a hunter's shirt. Many of these shirts have specific designs to reflect the family. He made the comparison of the specific design used on a family shield as seen in Ireland, Scotland, and Britain.

The singing, dancing and drum playing began with a song from Liberia in West Africa called Funga. It is a Welcome song. Then they played a song from Guinea in west Africa and performed the dance coo coo. Another dance that was played was from Senegal, which is on the western tip of the African continent, called lamba. The audience even got involved in the dancing and singing. Overall, I think it was a great performance with a lot of energy. For more information about African Resurrection go to [www.Sankofadancetheater.com](http://www.Sankofadancetheater.com).

Sarah Ede was there and said, "It was an excellent program. I felt that it brought an element of diversity and introduced an interesting culture. Plus I like the audience participation!"