



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## Yoga For Stress

The practice of asanas and pranayama is not only the most effective but also the most natural therapy for stress. If you come to a yoga class feeling stressed and anxious you usually leave the class feeling more relaxed. The practice of yoga harmonises your body and mind. The steady pace and rhythm of breath relaxes the body and detaches the mind from the worries of the external world. This healing effect can then be felt in your daily life when routine activities are performed efficiently.

### Effect on Postures

When your stress levels are high, it is sometimes hard to achieve the final posture effectively. Your muscles are tense and it becomes impossible to relax into a posture. So, if you feel stressed it is often better to use props such as blocks and belts as these help you to attain the benefit of the posture in a more relaxed way.

### Understanding Stress

The cumulative effects of stress can damage your health and undermine your emotional stability. Emotional tension and muscular tension are closely related. Continuous stress causes habitual muscular contraction, severe muscle and joint pain and tightness in the jaw or facial muscles. If you suffer from stress, you may experience severe indigestion or irritable bowel syndrome, headaches, migraine, a feeling of constriction in the diaphragm, breathlessness or insomnia. Too much stress ultimately leads to disease, premature ageing, or in extreme cases, fatal illness.

### Reducing Stress

To reduce stress, the body and mind cannot be treated as separate components. The tension associated with stress is stored mainly in the muscles, the diaphragm, and the nervous system. If these areas are relaxed, stress is reduced. Yogic methods of deep relaxation have a profound effect on the central nervous system, as well as the circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems. When a part of the body is tense, circulation to that area is decreased, reducing immunity. Yoga works on that area to relieve tension and increase circulation. Blood flow to all parts of the body improves, stabilising the heart rate and blood pressure. Rapid, shallow breathing becomes deep and slow, allowing a higher intake of oxygen, and removing stress from the body and mind.

### Food and Nourishment

The food we eat and the surroundings we inhabit must be conducive to stress-free living. Every activity in our modern world is fast and this includes activities related to food and the way we eat it. Junk food and food out of cans and packets has a tremendous negative impact on the body. If we increase our intake of fresh fruit and vegetables and nourish our senses with calming scents, sounds and sights, we will be on our way to a healthier lifestyle.

# Posture of the Month

## Savasana (Corpse Posture)

**This posture is always the final posture of any yoga class. It is often referred to as “The hardest posture of them all”. In this asana, the body is kept motionless and the mind is alert, yet calm. Savasana removes fatigue and soothes the mind. Each part of the body is positioned properly to achieve total relaxation. It's important to remember that any pain, or even discomfort, results in muscle guarding and tension. If you ever come to a class feeling exhausted and depleted then Savasana may be the most important posture you can do. You will leave the class feeling relaxed and refreshed and ready to face the rest of the day.**

### Technique

1. In Savasana it is essential that the body be placed in a neutral position. Lie down on your mat with your knees bent. Inhale and slowly extend your right leg, then the left, pushing through your heels. Release both legs and make sure that your feet are turned out equally. If you have lower back pain, keep your knees bent with your feet wide apart with your knees resting on each other.
2. Lift your head and take your chin towards your chest, which lengthens the back of the neck. If your chin is higher than your forehead it is important to place a folded blanket under your head.
3. Take your arms away from your body with the palms facing the ceiling. Make sure the shoulder blades are resting evenly on the floor. If there is still tension in your shoulders, you need to take your arms further away from your body until your shoulders completely relax.
4. In addition to quieting the physical body in Savasana, it's also necessary to quieten the sense organs. Your organs of perception – the eyes, ears and tongue – withdraw from the outside world. The body and mind become one and you experience inner silence. Let the eyes sink to the back of the head, then turn them downward to gaze at the heart. Release your brain to the back of the head.
5. Just allow your body to completely relax. Bring a smile to your face and this helps you to relax. The steady, smooth breathing in this posture allows energy to flow into the body, invigorating it and reducing the stress of everyday life. Let yourself sink into a blissful state, which is just between sleeping and being awake.
6. Stay in this posture for at least 5 minutes. To exit, first roll gently with an exhalation onto one side, preferably the right. Take 2 or 3 breaths. With another exhalation press your hands against the floor and lift your torso, and finally lift your head.

### Beginner's Tip

When you first practice Savasana it may seem impossible to quieten your mind. Thoughts keep jumping in and out. When these thoughts come in, don't pay them any attention. Just let them float away like clouds. Take your attention to your breathing. Follow the cool breath as it enters your nostrils down into your lungs and the follow the warm breath as it leaves your lungs and comes out through your nostrils. This helps to keep your mind quiet.

### Benefits of this posture

- Helps to alleviate nervous tension, migraine, insomnia and chronic fatigue syndrome
- Relaxes the body and eases breathing
- Removes physical and mental fatigue
- Enhances recovery from all long-term or serious illnesses
- Helps towards refreshing, dreamless sleep, especially for those with sleep disorders.



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