



The Mind-Body connection between Meditation and Stretching

The perfect combination of stretching and meditation, both Mind-Body techniques can have a real impact on your health and wellbeing. Stretching provides a lovely preparation, both physical and mental for your meditation practice, and be mindfully meditative in its own right.

The Physical Body Connections

- 1. Breathe more effectively.** Controlling your breath while stretching will teach you how to breathe slower and deeper. Breathing is the fundamental skill needed for many meditation practices, so this will improve your breathing techniques.
- 2. Sit more comfortably.** Meditation requires a pose that is both relaxed and alert, and a limber body will allow you to settle in any pose. So, you'll be able to relax on a chair or cushion.
- 3. Better posture.** Slumping in front of a computer or TV screen shortens and tightens your muscles. Stretching exercises will show you how to correct your alignment and carry your body weight more efficiently. Good posture will also help you sit a comfortable relaxed, but alert pose for your meditation
- 4. Lengthen your sessions.** Even a few minutes of meditation can produce dramatic results. However, the most valuable realisations often come from being able to sit for more extended periods, which better posture and pain-free muscles will allow.

The Mental Connections

- 1. Stretching promotes mindfulness.** You notice your body and breathing, your posture, any aches and pains, feelings and sensations as they arise, allowing you to focus on the awareness, your emotions, and what's coming up for you internally.
- 2. Reduce distractions.** When your body is more relaxed, the mind will have less chatter too. Minds wander, and your worries won't suddenly disappear, but you'll see faster results from your meditation when you engage both your body and mind.
- 3. Increase your awareness.** Being more in tune with your body allows you to be more aware of its internal messages. You'll find that your intuition and gut instinct grow stronger, and you'll journey on a path of inner discovery and knowledge.
- 4. Sharpen your concentration.** Since stretching boosts your concentration by bringing fresh oxygen to your brain cells, you can apply that fresh focus to your meditation session. Bring your attention back to the breath each time you catch your mind wandering away.
- 5. Boost your energy and wake up your body.** A long stretch is an ideal way to increase the energy flow throughout your body. Plus, it's a great way to end your meditation, bring awareness back to the body, and get ready to move on with your day.



Example Stretches to Help Meditation

- 1. Practice sitting poses.** The traditional lotus position awakens your energy level and quiets your mind. If you're just starting, a half lotus or relaxed sitting pose will generate some of the same benefits.
- 2. Twist around.** Twisting from the waist squeezes out toxins. It helps your circulatory system and internal organs function better.
- 3. Strengthen your core muscles.** Many stretches invigorate muscles in your back and abdomen. You'll lower your risk of back pain and have more energy for meditation and daily tasks. Start each morning with a series of sun salutations.
- 4. Release neck tension.** Sitting and sleeping in awkward positions can create chronic neck troubles. If you have difficulty lowering your head to your chest, gentle head rolls and other movements can put things back on track.
- 5. Soothe your shoulders.** Similarly, many people get in the habit of keeping their shoulders raised. Try holding light weights in your hands to lower your shoulders. Aim to duplicate that feeling all day.
- 6. Wiggle your toes.** You might be surprised to discover how much your toes can move once you give them a break from being squeezed into shoes all day. Curling and spreading your toes will cut down on foot pain and increase your balance.

Recharge your meditation practice by training for flexibility. Increasing your range of motion reduces stress and muscle soreness. You'll feel more supple and peaceful during your meditation sessions and in the hours in between.