

## 10 Trauma Sensitive Yoga Poses

These poses are useful for quieting the mind by engaging the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering heart rate and increasing heart rate variability. The poses have been selected with particular awareness for the needs of abuse survivors. The sequence is designed to optimize a feeling of grounded calm. As with all these trauma resources, we teach that you must use these resources for your self-care first, before attempting to teach others.

**1) Mountain:** Stand with your feet together or hip width apart. Broaden your collarbones; lift your chest. Allow your arms to drape down with the palms turned outward. Feel your feet extend into the ground. Lengthen the crown of your head up into the sky. Imagine you have the strength and quiet grace of a mountain. Inhale deeply to your collarbones. Exhale out through your feet and the crown of the skull. Inhale, make fists with your hands and then exhale, release them, opening the palms wide. Gather your strength from the earth on the inhale; release your effort into the sky with your exhale. Come back to stillness, noticing your breath and the movement inside you.

**2) Salute the Sun:** Feet firmly planted into the ground:  
Inhale, drawing both up arms up along your ears.  
Exhale, bringing arms back down to your sides.  
Inhale, drawing them up again, extending your fingertips to the sky. Exhale and lower your left arm to your thigh

Inhale, doing a side bend with the right arm extended to the sky and the left arm lengthening down the thigh  
Exhale, imagine the sun rising in the east  
Inhale, reaching the left arm up and the right arm down.

Imagine the sun setting into the west.  
Exhale as you reach into the sky. Repeat 3 times, watching the breath. Come back to Mountain pose. Notice the breath.

**3) Wide Angle:** From Mountain, bring your hands to your hips and step your feet about 3 - 4 feet apart depending on the length of your legs. Keep feet parallel. Inhale, clasping your hands together and draw them up to the sky, turning the palms upward.  
Exhale, releasing your hands and extending your arms, fingertips out to the horizon. Inhale, clasping your fingers together again in front of you and

Exhale, reaching up to the sky.  
Inhale back to extended arms.  
One more time – inhale and clasp your fingers together again in front of you and exhale reaching up into the sky. Inhale, back to extended arms. Bring your hands

to your hips and either jump both feet together or step back to Mountain pose. Notice the breath.

**4) Warrior 1:** From Mountain, step the feet apart to Wide Angle. Inhale draw the arms to shoulder height.

Exhale, reaching the fingers into the horizon.

Inhale, turning the right foot out and the left foot slightly in.

Exhale, bending the right knee over the ankle.

Inhale, drawing the left arm down and forward and both arms up to frame the ears. Reach your fingers into the sky. Square the hips.

Inhale and exhale for three breaths.

Inhale, straightening the right leg, parallel the feet return to Wide Angle.

Notice the breath.

Repeat but this time on the left side.

**5) Warrior 2:** From Mountain step the feet apart to Wide Angle. Inhale, bringing the arms to shoulder height.

Exhale, reaching the fingers into the horizon.

Inhale deeply

Exhale, turning the right toes out.

Inhale, bending the right knee over the ankle

Exhale, turning to look over your right fingertips

Keep the gaze steady but soft and the chest stacked over the hips. Inhale and exhale slowly for three breaths.

Inhale, straightening the right leg

Exhale, bring feet parallel.

Notice the breath. Repeat on the Left side.

**6) Peaceful Warrior:** From Warrior 2 on the right side, keep the knee bent over the ankle. Inhale, raising the right arm to the sky and lower the left arm to left leg Exhale into the side body. Hold for three breaths gently reaching down and up with the hands, feet firmly planted into the ground. Inhale come back to Warrior 2, exhale straighten the right leg. Move through Wide Angle to repeat on the Left side.

**7) Triangle:** From Mountain, step the feet apart to a wide angle. Inhale the arms to shoulder height. Exhale: reach the fingers into the horizon. Inhale deeply into your chest; exhale and turn the right toes out. Inhale: begin to crease at the hips and exhale gently; bring the right hand to the thigh or shin or maybe the ground. Keep the thigh muscles engaged to protect the knee or slightly bend the knee. Inhale and turn the gaze to the left hand. Exhale: reach into sky. Hold for three breaths if possible. Inhale: firmly plant the feet into the ground and return to standing. Exhale and bring the feet parallel and come back to wide angle. Notice the breath. Repeat on the left side.

**8) Tree Pose:** (This pose can be modified depending on the members' flexibility.) From Mountain, shift the weight slightly to the left foot. Draw the right knee up. Bring the right hand to the right ankle and gently place the sole of the foot along the inner left thigh or along the left calf or ankle. Use the gaze to help achieve balance by focusing gently on a spot 45 degrees in front of you.

Inhale, drawing the hands together at the heart in prayer position.  
Exhale, open the chest and square the shoulders, perhaps lifting the gaze up. Feel the feet rooted into the earth. Feel the gentle sway of the body as it shifts and balances. Hold for three breaths or as long as is comfortable. Consider drawing the arms into the sky as tree branches reaching upward.  
Inhale, drawing the knee back up  
Exhale gently and come back to Mountain. Repeat on the left side. Notice the breath.

**9) Forward Fold:** (This can be done seated on the floor, on a chair or on the floor with a chair placed in front of group members to rest their upper body on.) Seated on the floor, extend the legs together, place the palms on the ground beside the hips and broaden the collarbones. Inhale and exhale slowly. Gently flex and point the toes to loosen the ankles. Bring the feet to a neutral position (as if they were standing on the ground).

Inhale, reaching the arms up and gently folding forward at the hips to place the hands on the thighs, shins, ankles or feet, depending on comfort level.  
Exhale deeply.

Inhale, lengthening the spine while still folded and exhale: release forward and down. Keep the knees slightly bent. Hold for five breaths, lengthening the exhalation.

Inhale, reaching forward and up, gently raising the upper body.  
Exhale and come back to a seated position.

Seated in a chair, find that the feet are parallel and hip width apart and that they connect to the floor. If the feet do not reach the floor, books or other props can be used. Feel the weight of the body on the chair, the feet connected to the floor. Place the hands on the knees.

Inhale, extend the spine up and forward, straightening the arms to whatever degree possible Exhale, and gently drape down over the lap. Arms can hug the legs or take opposite arm to opposite elbow. Hold for 5 breaths, lengthening the exhalation. Inhale and slowly roll up to a seated position.

Notice the breath.

**10) Easy Pose with Cat & Cow and Spinal Twists:** (This can be done seated on the floor or on a chair.) Seated on the floor, cross the legs at the mid shin. If on a chair, keep the knees over the ankles and the feet parallel, hip width apart.

Bring the hands to the knees. Lengthen the spine upwards. Broaden the collarbones outward. Inhale to the collarbones.

Exhale slowly

Inhale, rounding the spine, lowering the chin to the sternum

Exhale and gently arch the back, lifting the gaze. Repeat two more times, deepening the twist. Return to neutral. Notice the breath. Take the right hand to the left knee and the left hand behind you to the floor or the back of the chair.

Inhale, lengthening the spine

Exhale: gently twisting the spine Repeat two more times. Inhale back to the center and take a counter twist to the right. Take the left hand to the right knee and the right hand behind you to the floor or the back of the chair.

Inhale, lengthening the spine

Exhale, gently twisting the spine Repeat two more times, while deepening the twist. Inhale back through center and take a counter twist to the left. Notice the breath.

**\*\* Restore Pose:** Lowers the heart rate and blood pressure and works very well to help in Grounding. Use a simple chair with no arms. if the chair has a back, place it sideways. From seated, bring the back to the ground. Place the calves, ankles and feet onto the chair so that the lower legs are completely supported. Encourage group members to bring one hand to their heart and the other to the belly. Slightly tucking the chin will help to quiet the mind. Feel the chest rise and fall with each breath; feel the weight of the body on the floor. Allow the floor to completely support and hold. Allow the group to remain here for 5 to 10 minutes. Bring them out of this gently by asking them to inhale deeply, exhale deeply, lengthening the exhalation. Roll the wrists and ankles; then gently draw the knees to the chest and roll to the side. Press the ground away and slowly roll up to seated.