

Simple Stretches for Stress Management

1. Child's Pose

Allow your big toes to touch and your knees to spread wide. The tops of your feet should be flat against the floor and your arms stretched in front of you.

Allow your forehead to rest on the ground. Relax and breathe.



2. Shoulder Rolls

Sit or stand with arms at your side. Move your shoulders forward, shrug them up, and then move them backward. Repeat 5 times. Then repeat shoulder roll 5 times in opposite direction - shoulders backward, shoulders up, shoulders forward, in one slow continuous circular motion.



3. Head Rolls & Neck Stretch

Begin with your head straight and your gaze forward. Very gently tip your head to the right and begin to move your chin towards your chest as you roll your head towards to the left. Gently tip your head back into an extended position (eyes are facing the ceiling) without crunching the back of your neck. Complete a few, slow rolls in each direction.



Allow your neck to bend gently to the right, trying to touch your right ear to your right shoulder. Stop when you feel a stretch. Hold position for 10-15 seconds. For a slightly deeper stretch, place your right hand all the way over your head and press gently for a little more leverage. Repeat on the left.



4. Forward Fold

Stand with feet hip-width apart, toes facing forward. Take a big breath in and exhale as you fold forward. Allow your arms to fall to a place that feels most comfortable for you. You can let your body hang with the arms dangling forward, reach for opposite elbows, or clasp your hands behind your back. Gently rock from side to side if it feels good for you. If the stretch feels too intense, place a slight bend in your knees. If you want a deeper stretch, reach for the back of your legs and draw your forehead closer to your shins. Relax your head and neck completely. Release the stretch by slowly uncurling your back until you return to standing.



5. Side Bend

Stand up straight with your feet hip-width apart, fingers interlaced at chest level. Turn your palms away and raise your arms overhead. Lengthen your arms, torso and legs. Relax your neck and hold for a count of five. Now bend slowly to the right and hold for a count of five. Return to the starting position. Then gently bend to the left and hold for a count of five.



6. Breathing Exercise

Find a comfortable position. Take a deep breath in through your nose as you count to 4. Feel as though the belly is filling with air. After filling the belly, keep inhaling. Fill up the middle of your chest. Feel your chest and ribcage expand. Hold the breath in for 2 counts, then begin to exhale slowly as you count to 6. Imagine that you are trying to flicker a candle flame with your breath. Repeat and relax.

