



# YOGA YOUR WAY

LETTING YOUR BODY GUIDE YOUR MOVEMENT

With **Yoga Your Way** we invite you to experiment and find ways of moving that feel appropriate for your body and needs in the moment. This booklet is presented in a sequence, but yoga is never 'one-size-fits-all'. To create a practice that works for you, you are welcome to choose which movements you try, how long you hold them and when you take rest. It is important to move within a range that doesn't increase pain or tension, and allows for your natural breath to flow. You might decide to practice yoga with your eyes open or closed, always guided by your comfort. If you have health concerns, it's a good idea to speak to your physician before adding in new exercise.

**Yoga** is a 5,000-year-old system of healing practices originating in India that includes philosophy, meditation, breath work, lifestyle and ethical principles, and movements (forms). Here you'll find some of the physical forms of yoga, called 'asana' in Sanskrit, the language in which yoga was first documented.

## Seated Mountain (Tadasana)



Find a comfortable seat with your feet in contact with the ground or other support such as blocks or thick books.

## Side to Side Movement



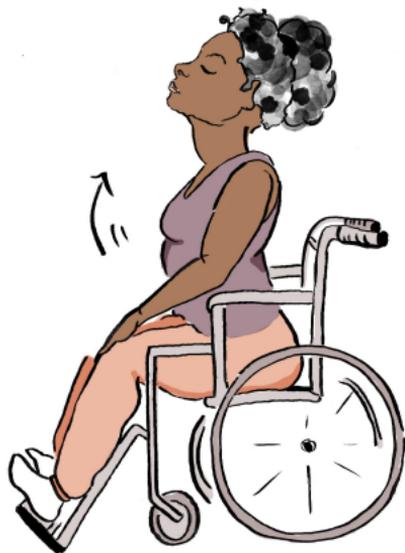
Try adding some movement. You could lean from side to side or try making some circles with your torso.

## Seated Mountain (Tadasana)



Explore gently lengthening up through your spine as you sit. You might also experiment with resting and softening the muscles of your shoulders and face a little here.

## Chair Cat Cow (Marjaryasana)



Try gently rounding, then lengthening or arching your spine any amount at your own pace. Be guided by your comfort. If you like, you can link the movement with breath. For example, exhaling as you round, inhaling as you lengthen and arch.

## Seated Spinal Twist (Parivrtta Sukhasana)



Sit sideways or on the front edge of the chair.  
Experiment with turning your body to one side a  
comfortable amount for a few breaths.

Repeat on your other side.

## Seated Side Stretch (Parsva Sukhasana)



From seated, try lengthening your arm up overhead. You might stay here lengthening your spine if that works best in your body, or try leaning over into a side stretch, noticing sensation.

Repeat on your other side.

## Shoulder Rolls



You might try rolling both shoulders up, back and down at the same time, or one at a time. If you like, try circling a few times in one direction, then reversing the direction, noticing sensation in the muscles of your shoulders and upper back.

## Seated Boat (Navasana)



You could sit sideways or on the front edge of your chair. Try lengthening your spine while seated, and if it's comfortable, you could try leaning back a little, maintaining the length of your spine, until you feel your abdominal muscles engage. Feel free to hold for a few breaths or move back and forth a few times.

## Leg Lifts



From seated, try lengthening one foot forward. Your leg could be straight or bent (according to your comfort). If you like, flex and point your foot a few times noticing muscle sensations as you do so.

Repeat on right and left sides.

## Backbend (Bhujangasana)



Try rolling your shoulders back and lengthening your spine. Option to take your hands behind you or even arch your back if it's comfortable to do so, finding a gentle stretch in the front of your body.

## Forward Fold (Paschimottanasana)



Try slowly hinging forward from your hips keeping your spine long. You might lean forward a little or a lot, depending on what works best for your body.

Option to have your hands or elbows resting on your legs or knees, or to take your hands to the ground.

## Breath Practice



Experiment with linking your movement to your breath. Inhaling as you widen your hands apart, exhaling as you bring your hands back together.

Try doing this for a few rounds of your breath.

## Rest (Savasana)



Notice the muscles around your face, jaw, eyes, neck, shoulders, arms and hands. If you like, continue to move your awareness through other parts of your body, inviting your whole body to rest for however long you'd like.

## Completing Rest



When you're ready, wiggle your toes, and fingers, and stretch or move any way you'd like.

## Closing



You could bring your hands together (Anjali Mudra) or rest your hands some other way (e.g., hands on your lap, one hand on your heart, or a gesture from your own ancestry). Take a couple of breaths, and if you like, use this moment to appreciate yourself for taking the time to practice yoga today.



reaching out  
with **yoga**

**Reaching Out with Yoga** was a five-year collaborative research project between the BC Society of Transition Houses and Yoga Outreach. During the project, volunteer yoga teachers shared trauma-informed and choice-based yoga with women, children and youth accessing Transition House services and PEACE programs across BC.

We created this booklet so that women, children and youth could continue to access trauma-informed yoga practices on their own, and when the in-person classes are not available to them.

For more information about the Reaching Out with Yoga project please visit [www.bcsth.ca](http://www.bcsth.ca) & [www.yogaoutreach.ca](http://www.yogaoutreach.ca).



BC Society of  
Transition Houses

