



DAY 4 - A "PURR-FECT" DAY TO SIT AND STAND

Transcript

Hi everyone! It's Day 4 of *The 12 Days of Yoga*.

Today's session focuses on the *cat* pose. This recording refers to the seated and standing variations, and alternatives for the pose. If you prefer the floor variations, refer to my other recording.

Variations of cat pop up in many of my classes because it's a 'purr-fect' pose to warm up the spine and it's accessible to so many people with different levels of fitness and yoga experience. Some of the cat variations don't really have a seated or standing equivalent, so in this session there will be alternative poses with similar benefits.

Whether you're planning to do the seated or standing cat, you'll need a chair for some of the alternative poses. Ensure that the chair is sturdy and you can place your feet flat on the floor, or if you need to, have a blanket or foot rest for support.

(1:24) CAT

Prepare for cat.

If you're using the chair, sit with your feet about hip width apart and place your hands on your thighs.

If you're standing:

- Stand with the feet hip width apart, turn the toes in so the outsides of the feet are parallel.
- Bend the knees and lean forward slightly (as if you're going to sit back into a chair). and place the hands on the thighs.

When you are ready:

- Breathe in and push the tail bone back, arch the lower back, bring the abdomen forward.
Roll the shoulders back, open the chest and look up slightly.
Do not over extend the neck – especially if you have neck problems.
 - Hold this position and breathe.
Feel the breath expanding in the chest.
- ...
- On an exhalation, tuck the tail bone under, round through the back and lower the head.

- Hold this position.

As you breathe in and out, feel the shoulder blades expanding and relaxing.

Imagine that you're drawing breath in between each of the vertebra.

Now continue the movement, doing whatever feels good for you:

- You might like to breathe naturally and focus on moving the spine lightly and loosely.
- You might like to work with the breath, inhaling as you open through the chest, exhaling as you round through the back, or
- You can focus on every vertebra starting from the base of the spine:
 - Inhale, push the tail bone out and then move up, vertebra by vertebra, raising the head last.
 - As you breathe out, tuck the tail bone under, slowly working through the back, bringing the chin towards the chest last.

Do whatever feels right for you!

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Do a couple more rounds, and then whether you're seated or standing, sit in the chair, feet hip width apart, the hands resting in the lap or on the thighs, eyes gently closed.

(4:40) LEG LOCK POSE

Slowly open the eyes.

Sit up straight, lengthening through the spine.

- Inhale and bend the right knee, raising the knee up towards the chest.
If it's comfortable for you, clasp your hands around the knee or thigh, draw the knee a little closer and then, round the back and bring your nose towards your knee.
- On an exhalation, lower the leg back to the ground.
- Repeat on the other side. Inhale, raise the left knee towards the chest, and if it's comfortable, clasp your hands around the knee or thigh, draw the knee a little closer, then round through the back and bring your nose towards the chest [*Correction: Should be "knee"*].
- Exhale, and lower the leg

Continue that movement with your breath – moving from one leg to the other.

And if this breathing pattern doesn't work for you, then do whatever feels comfortable, just making sure you are breathing!

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Make this your last round, ensuring that you're done an equal number of rounds on both legs. And then come back to sitting in the chair, feet hip width apart, hands resting in the lap or on the thighs.

(6:52) KNEE EXTENSIONS

When you are ready, lengthen through the spine.

- On an inhalation raise the right knee.
- Exhale, extend the leg out in front, pushing through the heel bringing the toes back towards you. Feel the stretch through the back of the leg.
- On your next inhalation, bend the knee.
- Exhale, place the foot back on the floor.

Only raise the leg as high as you can without leaning back. Use your abdominal and back muscles to keep the torso upright. If anything, the spine is straight and you're leaning forward slightly.

Moving to the other side ...

- Inhale, raise the left knee.
- Exhale, extend the leg out in front, pushing through the heel.
Feel the stretch through the back of the leg.
- Inhale, bend the knee.
- And on your next exhalation, place the foot back on the floor.

Continue moving with your breath:

- Inhaling, raising a leg
- Exhaling, extending it out in front
- Inhaling, bending the knee
- And exhaling, placing the foot back on the floor

Again, if you don't feel comfortable with the breathing pattern, focus on the movement instead and breathe naturally.

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Do one more on each side, ensuring that you have done an equal number of rounds on both legs ...

And then return to your seated position.

(9:35) SEATED/STANDING SIDE STRETCH

Next is a side bend, which can be done from a seated or a standing position.

If you wish to remain seated, keep the feet hip width apart.

If you're going to stand, come up and step your feet wide, maybe a little wider than shoulder width.

Bring your hands behind the head, onto the shoulders, or leave them relaxed by the side (if you're seated) or on the sides of your legs (if you're standing).

- Inhale and lengthen up through the body.
- Exhale, and bend to one side.

Imagine you're against a wall. Make sure you're not rolling forward in an effort to come down lower.

- On an inhalation, come back up.
- And then exhale, and bend to the other side.

Breathe!

- Inhale. Come back to centre.

Continue bending from side to side:

- Exhaling when you bend to the side
- Inhaling as you come back to centre

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Do one more on each side, making sure that you feel balanced ...

... and then, if you're seated, sit in the chair, hands in the lap or on the thighs, and the feet about hip width apart.

If you're standing, step back in so the legs are hip width apart, let the arms relax by the side.

Close your eyes and feel the effects of the side bend on your body.

(12:18) TWISTING CAT (WITH ALTERNATIVE SEATED/STANDING TWIST)

Open the eyes.

The next pose is *twisting cat*. Twisting cat involves a slight forward bend with a twist, which can put a lot of pressure on the spine.

If this pose is not for you, do a gentle seated or standing twist as follows:

- If you're standing, step the feet wide again.
- Whether you're seated or standing bring the hands behind the head, or place them on the shoulders, or leave them relaxed by your sides.
- Inhale and lengthen up through the spine ...
- ... and on an exhalation turn the body to one side.
- Inhale, come back to your original position
- Exhale, turn to the other side
- Inhale, return to centre.

Continue twisting from side to side:

- Exhaling as you twist to one side,
- Inhaling as you come back to centre.

The twisting cat can also be done seated or standing.

Start in the same position as 'cat':

- If you're sitting, sit with your feet about hip width apart and place your hands on your thighs, and then lean forward slightly.
 - If you're standing, stand with the feet hip width apart, the outsides of the feet parallel. Bend the knees and lean forward slightly, placing the hands on the thighs.
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- Inhale and lengthen through the spine.
 - Exhale and moving from the base of the spine, twist the body to the left.
Keep the hands on the thighs and let the right shoulder come towards the mid line of the body.
 - Inhale and slowly untwist, moving from the base of the spine, vertebra by vertebra, until the spine is straight.
 - On your next exhalation, twist towards the right moving from the base of the spine.
Open up to the right, bringing the left shoulder towards the middle of the body.
 - Inhale, and slowly move from the base of the spine, vertebra by vertebra, until the spine is straight.

Do another two twisting cats or gentle twists to each side.

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When you complete the rounds (and there's no hurry), slowly straighten up, and if you're standing come back into the chair.

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(16:00) ENDING THE SESSION

Close the eyes.

Feel the feet flat on the floor.

Extend up through the spine, and let the hands rest in the lap or on the thighs.

Turn the attention to the breath.

With each in breath, feel the body expanding.

And on the exhalation, soften and let go.

Rest here, letting the effects of the poses be assimilated into the body.

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When you're ready, open the eyes and continue with your day.

Aum shanti!