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# flow-yoga™ :awakenings

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As each day begins, millions of people all over the world drag themselves out of bed...stiff, sore, 'foggy' and lethargic. To them, the phrase 'good morning!' is an oxymoron. It seems that the more appropriate adages for these individuals might be, 'crawl and haul' or 'morning, already?' If you, or one of your clients, identify with the latter phrases, then this awakening routine is for you!

The incorporation of gentle yoga poses into your daily wake-up ritual prepares the body, both physically and mentally, for the day ahead, so rather than beginning your day groggy or scattered, aim to start the day with calmness and purpose. By performing fluid movement patterns in combination with deep breathing and mental focus, while still in bed, the mind and body are gradually awakened and stimulated.

Yoga performed in the morning should always be gentle and done at a pace that is controlled, yet energizing. In this manner, muscles and soft tissue are lengthened, joints are lubricated, and range of motion is increased from resting positions. The movement of the body aids in 'massaging' internal organs, which keeps them stimulated and may facilitate peristalsis (which aids digestion and elimination). Additionally, metabolic responses are gradually increased, which include elevated heart rate and respiratory rate responses, increased blood flow throughout the body, and higher oxygen uptake and neurological responses.

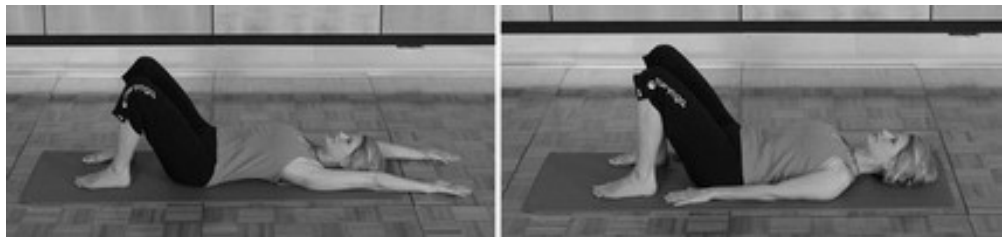
The body is not the only beneficiary of morning yoga programs; there are advantages for the mind, as well. With the use of mental focus, the mind is prepared for the challenge, multi-tasking, concentration and undertakings of the day to come. Yoga has been shown to improve attention, memory and mood, while decreasing anxiety and hostility. To the morning grumps, are you reading this?

The benefits of performing yoga are numerous. Practicing yoga in the morning, before the day begins, is simple, yet powerful. It will change your day... and you may find that 'waking-up' is actually a pleasure!

Upon awakening, while still in bed, position yourself so you can reach up and overhead (toward the headboard) and out to the sides without having to bend your elbows. Remove the pillow(s) from under your head, and if it's not too cold, move on top of the blankets and sheets. These movements can also be done on a carpeted floor or a yoga mat. If you need to go to the toilet first, do so.

### Arm Reach

Lying face up, with knees bent, and the feet placed flat and hip width apart, reach both arms slowly up and



overhead on a deep inhale. On the exhale, bring both arms down to the sides. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



### **Moving Bridge**

Begin with arms to the sides, lying face up with the knees bent, and the feet placed flat and hip width apart. On the exhale, press the pelvis slowly

toward the ceiling, lifting the hips off of the bed. Keep the knees over the ankles. Feel the front of the body stretching and the back of the body working. When ready to inhale, lower the hips back down to the bed gently. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

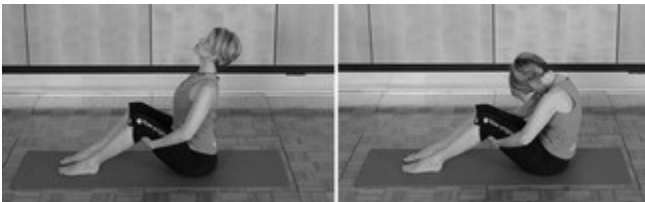
### **Alternating Knee to Chest**

On each exhale, draw one knee into the chest, holding on with both hands behind the thigh. During the inhales, stretch the leg back out toward the foot of the bed and repeat on the other leg. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



### **Supine Wide Stance Twisting Vine**

From a supine position, with the knees bent and the feet facing straight ahead, move the feet to a wide stance (wider than hip width) and reach the arms out to the sides. On an exhale while keeping the shoulders anchored to the floor, begin to let the knees fall to the right, as the head turns to the left (turning the head only if this is comfortable for the neck, otherwise look straight up at the ceiling). On the inhale, move back to the center starting point, moving across to the other side on the next exhale. Repeat 5-10 times.



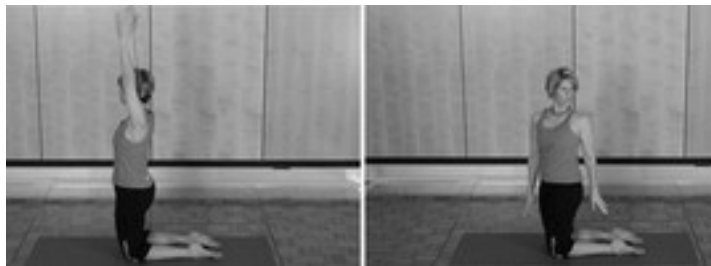
### **Seated Upward/Downward Facing Cat**

Sitting upright with the knees bent and feet hip width apart, place one hand behind each thigh. Inhale and look up slightly, while moving the spine into

extension (arching) and drawing the shoulder blades down and toward each other. On the exhale look down and move the back into flexion (rounding) while the shoulder blades move away from one another. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

### **Kneeling Spiral**

From an upright kneeling position, draw both arms up and overhead on an inhale. On the exhale, let the arms float down to the sides while rotating the spine as far as possible to the left and looking back over the left shoulder. When inhaling, move back to the centre with the arms overhead, and repeat on the other side. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



### **Kneeling Bent Reed**

While in an upright kneeling position, inhale and bring the arms up and overhead. Upon exhalation, allow the left arm to move down the outside of the left thigh while the right arm reaches up. Offer support for the spine by leaning on the left thigh with the left hand. Look down toward the supporting hand. On the next inhale move back to the starting point, and repeat to the other side. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

### **Camel Pose**

Take both hands behind the body and onto the hips, with the thumbs facing away from each other and the fingers pointing straight down. Bring the elbows and shoulders behind the body as far as possible, bringing the shoulder blades together as closely as possible. On an inhale, begin to press the hips forward and allow the upper body to move back. Keep the head in line with the spine, or continue to look forward if that is more comfortable. Hold for 3 to 10 breaths and repeat 2 to 3 times.



### **Mountain Pose**

Come to a standing position on the floor next to the bed. Place the feet a comfortable distance apart and stand tall. Bring the ribcage down, the shoulders over the hips and the ears over the shoulders. The hands can be down at the sides, or palms can come together in front of the heart center (as shown). Use this position to further increase the heart rate and blood flow, and get you moving! Hold for 5 to 50 breaths.

Now go out and make it a great day, and don't forget to brush your teeth!