

A woman with long blonde hair is performing a tree yoga pose (Vrikshasana) on a rocky shore. She is wearing a black tank top and shorts. Her hands are pressed together in a prayer position above her head. The background shows a calm sea under a twilight sky, with silhouettes of trees and a dog resting on the rocks in the foreground.

# Trauma Informed Yoga

A Toolbox for Every Day People

All images Alice Oliviia Photography; Animale by Alice Olivia ; [aliceoliviaportraits.com.au](http://aliceoliviaportraits.com.au)



## What is Yoga?

The word yoga means union or to yoke. A state of yoga is a state where one has unified their consciousness, the mind is free of constant chatter and the body is free of the associated stresses and the breath is even and deep. Yogis use asana, breath and awareness to move towards the goal of yoga.



What is Trauma Informed Yoga?

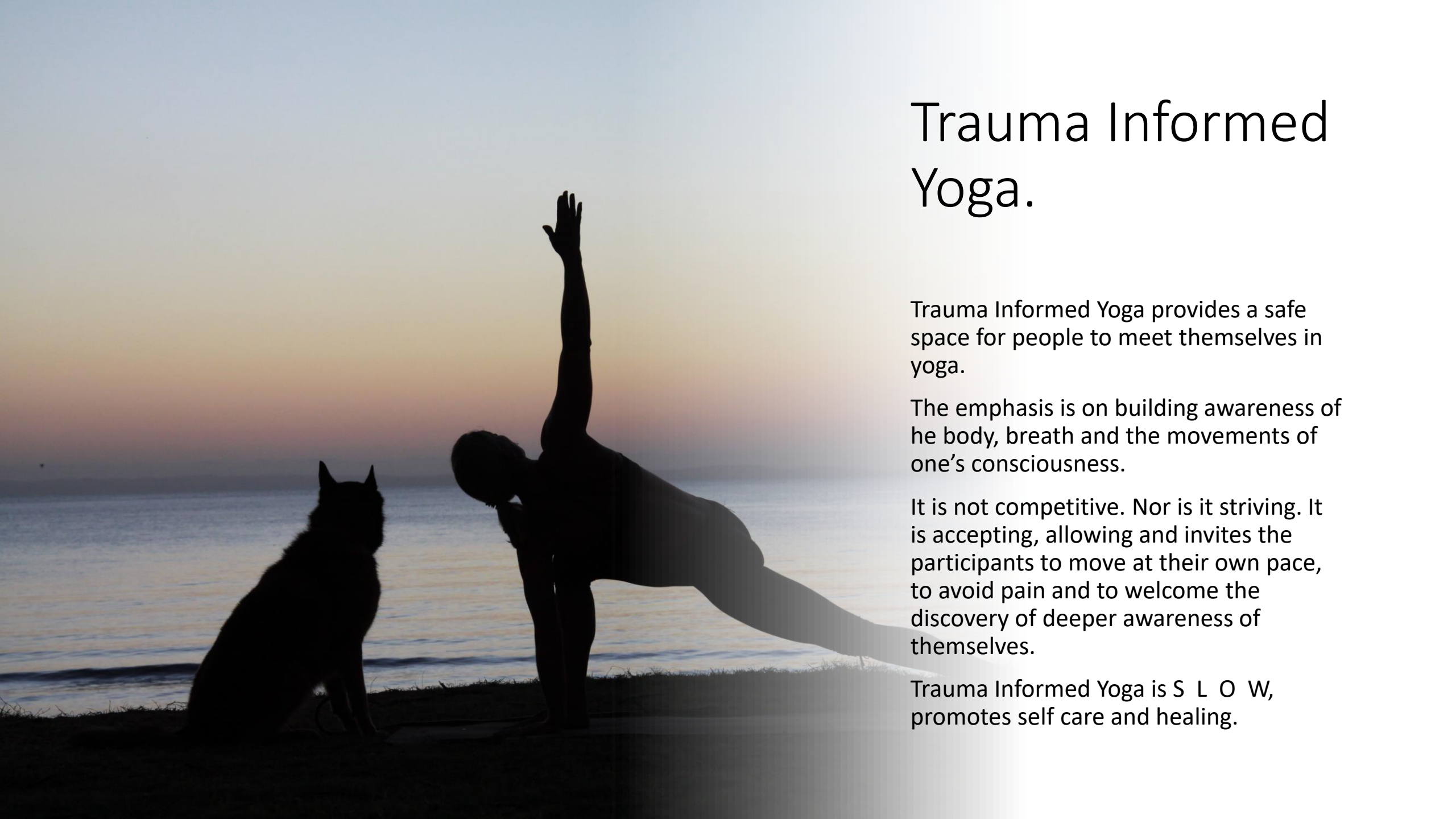
# Trauma Informed Yoga.

Trauma Informed Yoga provides a safe space for people to meet themselves in yoga.

The emphasis is on building awareness of the body, breath and the movements of one's consciousness.

It is not competitive. Nor is it striving. It is accepting, allowing and invites the participants to move at their own pace, to avoid pain and to welcome the discovery of deeper awareness of themselves.


Trauma Informed Yoga is S L O W, promotes self care and healing.





## Trama Informed Yoga Toolbox – whats inside?

- The toolbox contains a series of mini practices which can be used as stand alone practices or together as part of a larger practice.
- Practices are divided by their characteristics of Calming, Energising and Balancing, these match with the nervous system feedback and the three gunas.
- Practices may incorporate movement, stillness, breath, focused mental awareness or a combination of these.
- Choose your practice according to your energetic state.



# The Three Gunas and the Nervous System

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## **Rajas**

Activity  
Passion, desire & attachment  
Energy  
Expansion  
Movement  
Binds by means of passion and craving.  
RELATES TO SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM  
Use Calming practices.  
Temper Rajas

## **Sattva**

Truth / Goodness  
Light, harmony & balance  
Spiritual Essence  
Upward flow  
Intelligence & consciousness  
Binds by means of attachment to knowledge and joy.  
RELATES TO PARASYMPATHETIC VENTRAL VAGUS CIRCUIT  
Use Balancing Practices.  
Practice non attachment

## **Tamas**

Inertia & inactivity  
Darkness, delusion & ignorance  
Mass / matter / heaviness  
Downward flow  
Sloth & dullness  
Binds by means of ignorance and obstruction  
RELATES TO PARASYMPATHETIC DORSAL VAGUS CIRCUIT  
Use Energising Practices  
Resist Tamas

<https://www.yogabasics.com/learn/the-3-gunas-of-nature/>

# Centering

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This exercise involves focusing on your physical posture, your breath, the control of the breath and acknowledging how you feel in the present moment.

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Sit with a straight spine and a comfortable body – use a chair if it is more comfortable.

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Your eyes may be open or closed. Try balancing your rib cage above your pelvis.

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Now try balancing your head above your rib cage.

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Notice your breath exactly as it is in this moment, there is not need to change it or judge it, just pay attention to it.

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Is it long or short? Are you breathing through your nose or your mouth?

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Can you deepen your breath a little?

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Let yourself come back from this slowly and notice how your feel. Just be for a moment.

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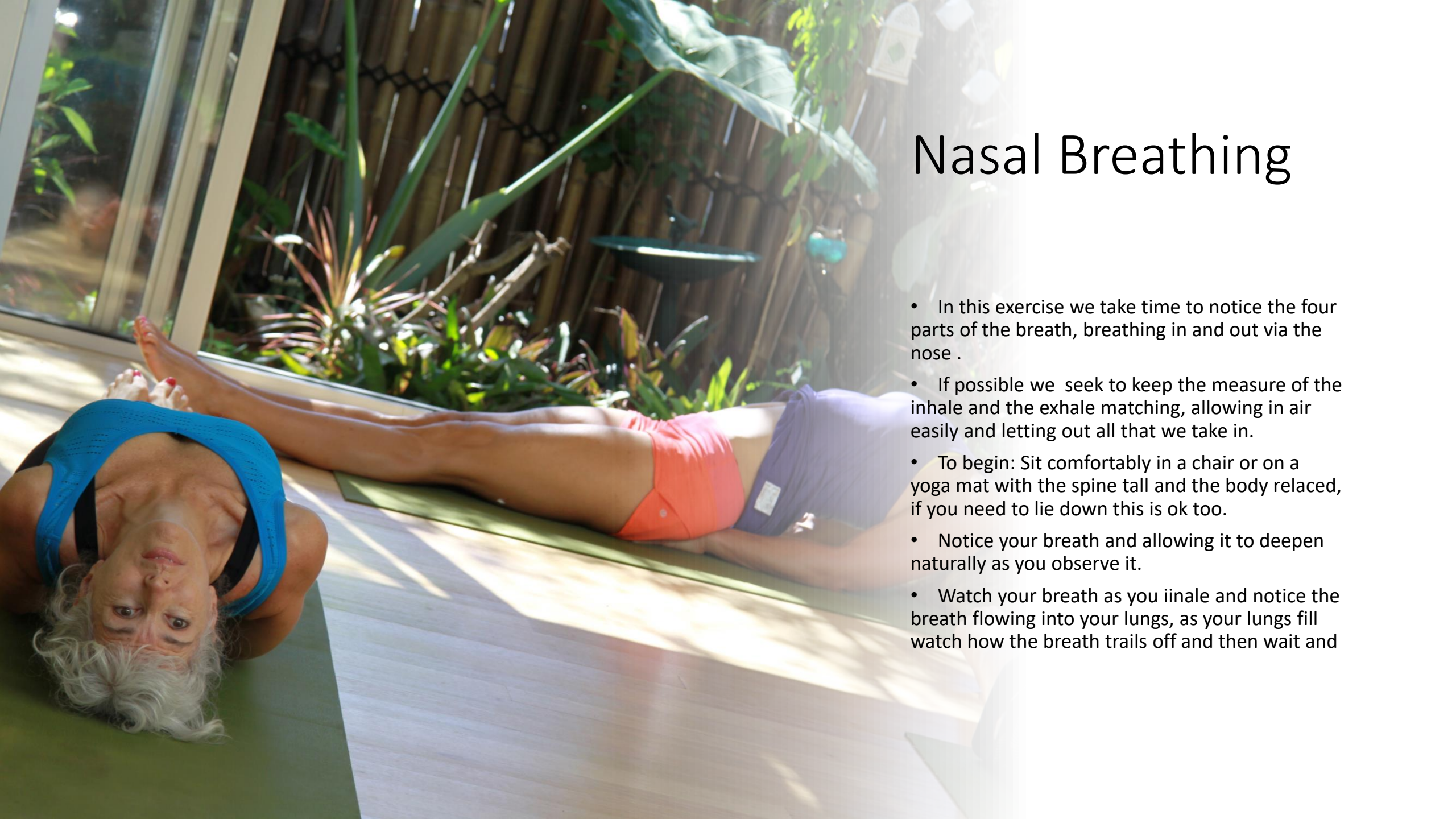
Balancing, Calming





# Nasal Breathing

- In this exercise we take time to notice the four parts of the breath, breathing in and out via the nose .
- If possible we seek to keep the measure of the inhale and the exhale matching, allowing in air easily and letting out all that we take in.
- To begin: Sit comfortably in a chair or on a yoga mat with the spine tall and the body relaxed, if you need to lie down this is ok too.
- Notice your breath and allowing it to deepen naturally as you observe it.
- Watch your breath as you inhale and notice the breath flowing into your lungs, as your lungs fill watch how the breath trails off and then wait and



# Arm raises

Connecting breath and movement allows the body and the mind to harmonise.

- From a seated position raise your arms with the inhale aiming to touch the fingers and hands together,
- Lower on an exhale reaching out to the side. Try following the breath all of the way to the end.
- Repeat 5 times .

Energising and calming.



A man and a woman are performing a seated side stretch in a sunlit room. The man, in the foreground, is wearing a blue t-shirt and black shorts, kneeling on a green mat with his right arm extended to the floor and his left arm reaching up and over his head. The woman, behind him, is wearing a purple top and black pants, also kneeling on a green mat with her right arm extended to the floor and her left arm reaching up and over her head. The room has large windows overlooking a lush garden with trees, a wooden fence, and string lights. The text 'Seated Side Stretches' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Seated Side Stretches

Begin in a comfortable seated position

Raising one arm on an inhale and reaching it over head creating a side stretch on the exhale.

- Inhale to raise arm up, exhale to stretch through side.
- Move slowly and enjoy the feeling.
- Can be performed in other positions.
- Repeat each side 3 times
- Energising, can be balancing

A silhouette of a person standing on a beach at sunset, performing Mountain Pose (Tadasana). Their hands are pressed together in a prayer position (Anjali Mudra) at chest level. The background shows the ocean and a darkening sky.


# Mountain Pose Seated or Standing

- The stillness of Mountain pose creates a deep peace and allows us to find postural balance. You can start by standing or sitting and feeling through your feet.
- Balance the three cavities of the body; hips, rib cage and cranium by placing them one on top of the other.
- Feel for the centre line from inner heels to head
- In a chair keep the spine straight and if possible away from the back of the chair.
- Balancing and Calming



# Tree Pose

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- Can be as simple as holding one foot off the floor, or placing your foot on your body either with the toes on the ground and your knee out to the side, or with your foot on our calf.
- Arms and hands can be moving or still, if moving try raising your hands above your head either with your hands apart or together.
- Perhaps try to keep your gaze still. Stilling the gaze, stills the mind.
- Hold for 5 or more breaths.
-  Balancing, can be calming.

# Square Breathing

A wonderful technique to use anytime, calming and balancing.

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Breathe in  
for four  
counts

2

Hold  
breath for  
four  
counts

3

Breathe  
out for  
four  
counts

4

Resist  
breathing  
for four  
counts

5

Repeat

# Viloma or Staircase Breathing

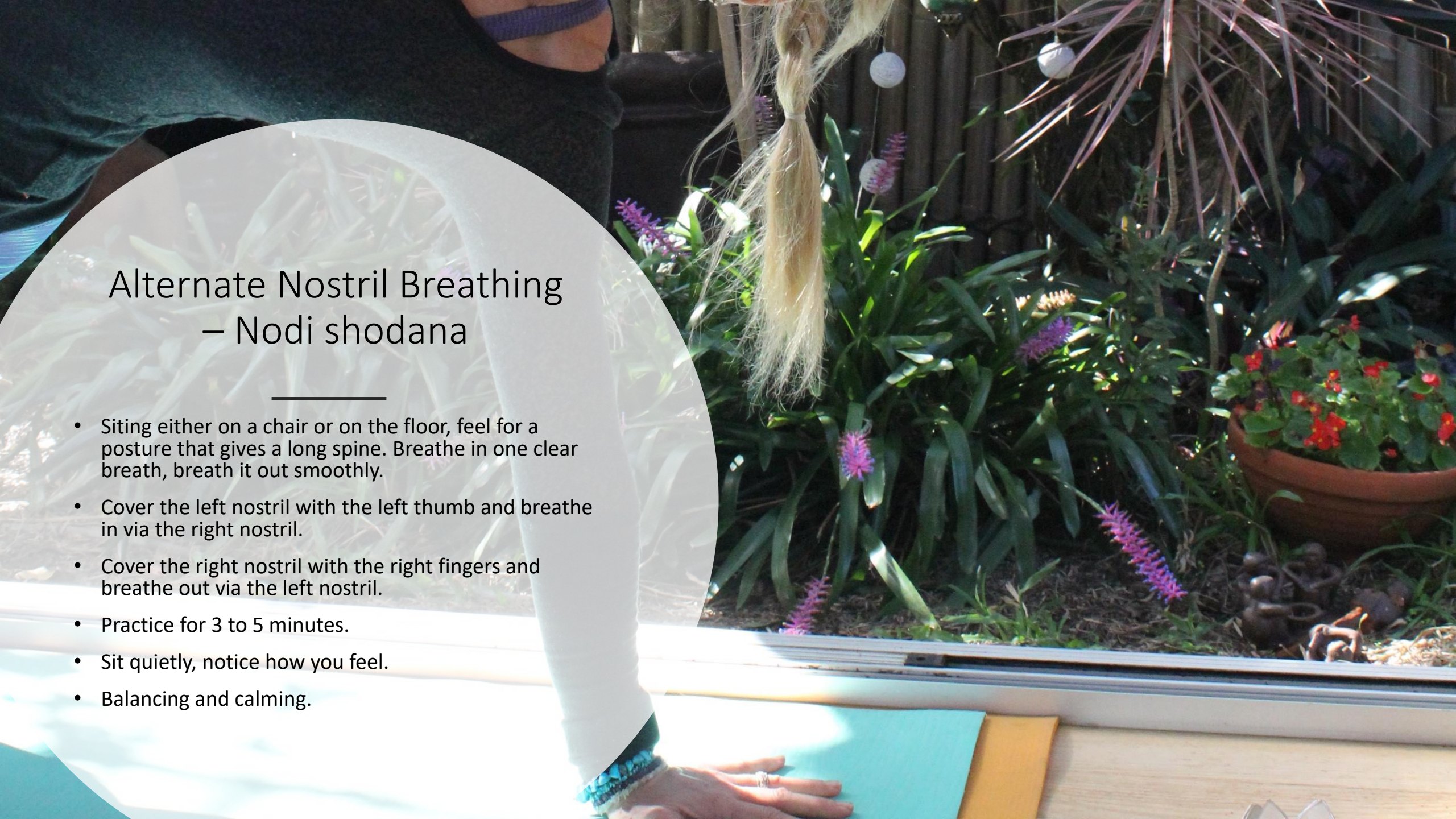
This simple breath technique works in tune with the three sections of the lungs.

When breathing in the inhale is broken into three parts with a long exhale. This is followed by long inhales followed by exhailes broken into three parts

- Breathe in in 3 parts, breathe out in one long breath – repeat 3 to 5 times
- Breathe in smoothly, Breathe out in 3 parts, Repeat 3 to 5 times .
- Sit and watch your breath, notice how your feel



Calming

A person is shown from the chest down, sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. They are wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a blue beaded bracelet on their left wrist. Their hands are resting on a light blue mat on the bench. In the background, there is a garden with various plants, including purple flowers and a large potted plant with red flowers. A wooden fence and some hanging plants are also visible.

## Alternate Nostril Breathing – Nodi shodana

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- Sitting either on a chair or on the floor, feel for a posture that gives a long spine. Breathe in one clear breath, breath it out smoothly.
- Cover the left nostril with the left thumb and breathe in via the right nostril.
- Cover the right nostril with the right fingers and breathe out via the left nostril.
- Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Sit quietly, notice how you feel.
- Balancing and calming.



# Coherent Breathing

This deeply relaxing breath is extremely long and aims to achieve 5 breaths per minute. This is achieved by breathing in for a count of 6 and matching it on the exhale.

- Taking in a breath or 6 seconds and breathing out for 6 seconds, just as with Yogic breathing observe the spaces between the breaths.
- Continue for 4 minutes



Deeply calming.



# Chair or mat Pigeon Pose

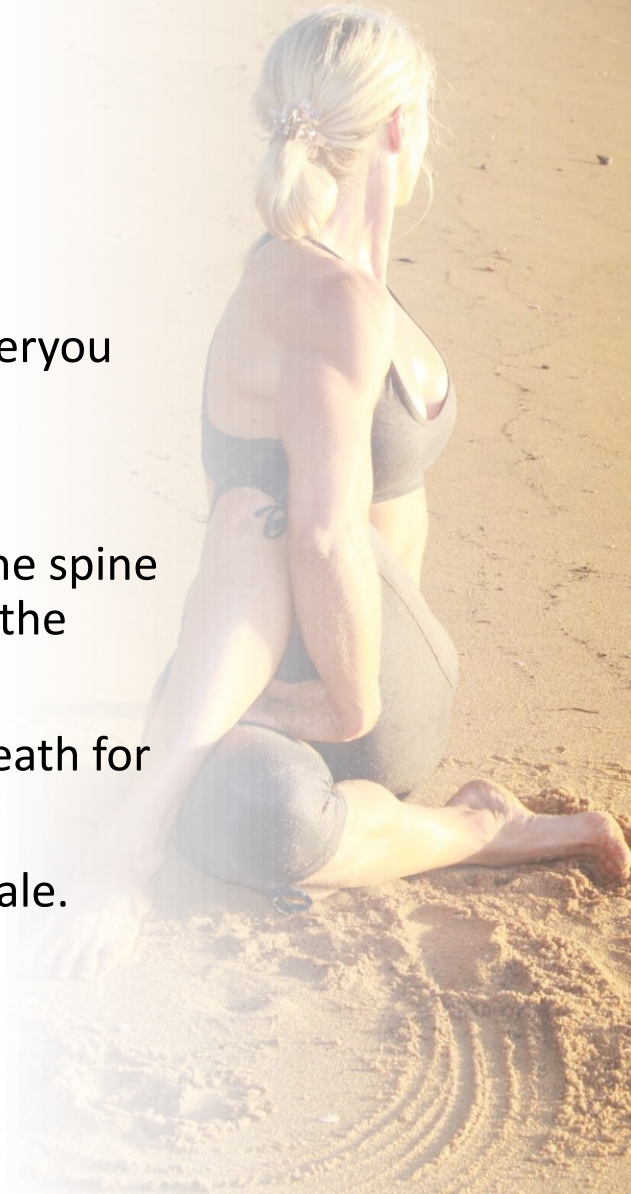
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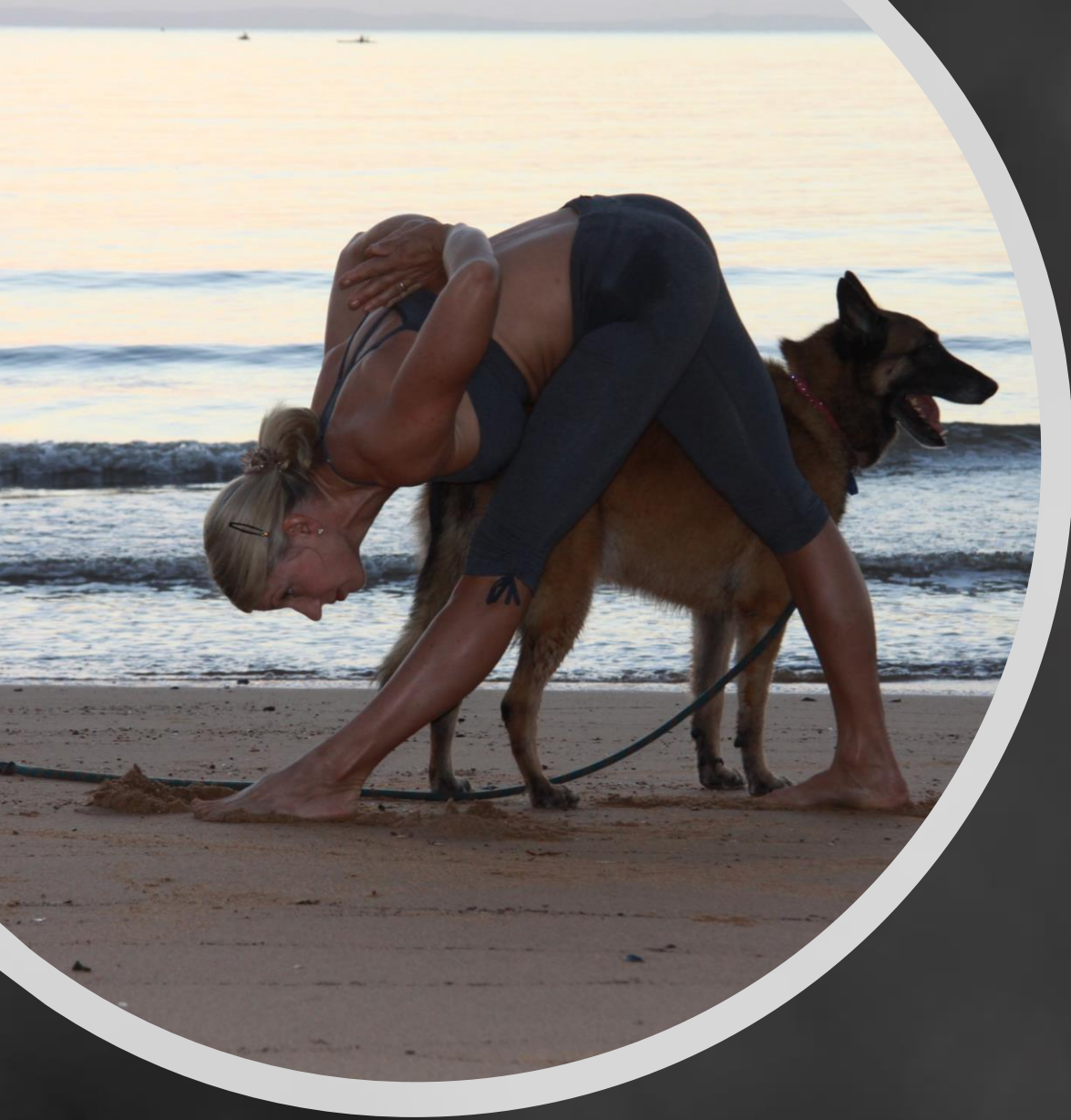


- Long Stretch for large muscles of the hips
- Chair: whilst sitting bring one leg over the other, placing the ankle bone outside the thigh it is crossing.
- Stay upright or gently bend at the hips.
- Breathe long full breaths for a minute or two. Change sides.
- Mat: Face down, bring one leg to the top of the mat in a right angle, raise the hips off the mat and stretch one leg behind.
- Breathe long full breaths for a minute or so and change sides.
- Balancing

# Spinal Twist

- Sit tall and straight wherever you are comfortable.
- Look for a long spine.
- Breathe in up the length of the spine and breathe out to turn to the side.
- Remain in the twist and breathe for as long as feels good.
- Return to centre on an exhale.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Balancing.





# Placing the head below the heart

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Mayb be done seated or standing.

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Seated: fold at the hips and allow the head to hang over the legs.

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Standing : rest the back of the hips against a wall and fold forward with bent legs.

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Lying: place the legs up a wall

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Balancing, calming

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NB: Avoid if glaucoma or detached retinas are present. Contraindicated for those with untreated high blood pressure, please avoid.

A woman is performing a yoga pose on a grassy bank next to a lake. She is lying on her back with her right arm raised and her left leg extended. A dog is lying on its back on the grass nearby. The background shows a large body of water and a dense forest of trees under a blue sky with some clouds.

## Savasana/Corpse pose

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- Lie or sit comfortably
- Relax the body completely
- Watch the breath
- Allow thoughts to pass
- Continue returning awareness to the breath.

# I am here now

- First-person, present-tense affirmations can ground you and support you in being present in the moment
- In this practice, an affirmation is paired with a hand movement.
- Begin by touching your index finger to your thumb, and then your middle, ring and smallest fingers. Each time you touch a finger to your thumb say a word “I am her now” or “Peace begins with me” can be helpful
- Words can be said out loud or in your head.
- Balancing.





# Breath of Joy

- inhale, lift the arms toward the sky. Exhale them
- out to the side. Inhale them back up, and then exhale, bending your knees and swinging your arms down while saying a loud ha...
- Uplifting and Energising
- Spence, Joanne. Trauma-Informed Yoga: A Toolbox for Therapists: 47 Practices to Calm Balance, and Restore the Nervous System (p. 262). PESI Publishing, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

Namaste

