



# Mindful Stretching

## Transcript

Mindful Stretching... Begin by standing up with your feet parallel to each other and about a hip's width apart, and knees unlocked so that the legs can bend slightly. Notice if any physical sensations are present... It is in fact unusual to stand with your feet parallel to each other and this, itself, can generate some novel body sensations.

Remind yourself of the intention of this practice: to become aware of the physical sensations and feelings throughout your body, and as you gently stretch, noticing and honouring the limitations of your body in every moment, letting go, as best as you can, of any urge to push beyond your limits or compete with either yourself or others.

Now, on an in-breath, slowly raise your arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor... Pause on the out-breath and then continue to raise your arms slowly and mindfully on the next in-breath until your hands meet above your head. Notice the physical sensations that are present, as your muscles work to lift the arms and maintain the stretch...

Then, with your feet firmly grounded on the floor and allowing your breath to move freely, continue to stretch upward, gently pushing your fingertips toward the sky... Once again, notice and observe the physical sensations, as you feel the stretch in the muscles and joints of the body, all the way from the feet and legs, up through the back, shoulders, into the arms and hands and fingers.

See if you can continue to breathe freely while gently maintaining the stretch for a moment...

Notice any changes in the sensations and feelings in the body... this might include a sense of increasing tension or discomfort... if so, see if you can gently welcome these new sensations, allowing them to be present, if only for a moment. Notice also, any urges to push further to stretch beyond your limits, or any thoughts that might enter your awareness...



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When you are ready, begin to lower your arms down very slowly, noticing the change in the physical sensations... As you lower your arms, gently bend your wrists so that the fingers point upward and the palms are pushing outward... (again, an unusual position)... until the arms come back to rest along the sides, hanging from the shoulders. Spend a moment now simply observing the changing sensations in your muscles and joints...

As you stand here, allow your eyes to close and focus your attention on the movements of the breath, and the feelings throughout your body, see if you can notice the contrast in the physical sense of release, and often relief associated with returning to a neutral position.

Now, gently stretch each arm and hand up in turn, as if trying to pick a fruit from a tree that is just a little out of reach, anchoring your full attention on the sensations throughout the body, including your breath... As you slowly and mindfully stretch each arm in turn, you may choose to gently lift the opposite heel off the floor while stretching up, and observe the changes in your muscles and your breath as your body adjusts to this new position...

Now, on your in-breath, slowly raise both arms up high, keeping them parallel to each other, and on the out-breath allow the body to bend over to the left, forming a big curve that extends sideways from the feet right through the torso... the arms... the hands... and fingers... Then, on the next in-breath, come back to the upright position. Next, on the outbreath, slowly bend over to the right, forming a curve in the opposite direction, once again noticing the sensations of stretching of your body... You may choose to repeat this sequence a few times.

Once you have returned to standing in a neutral position with the arms alongside the body, gently roll the shoulders while letting the arms dangle passively. First, slowly raise the shoulders upward toward the ears as far as they will go, then back down, as if attempting to draw the shoulder blades together... Then letting your shoulders drop down completely. Next, squeeze the shoulders together in front of the body, as if trying to touch them together with the arms passive and dangling all



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the while, first in one direction, then in the opposite direction, in a forward and backward 'rowing' motion. Once again, you may choose to repeat this sequence several times...

Now, slowly and mindfully move the head around to whatever degree you feel comfortable, and very gently, as if drawing a circle with the nose in the mid-air, allow the circling to move gently in one direction and then then other...

Finally, at the end of this sequence of movements, return to a neutral standing position, and remain still for a while, tuning into your breath and the sensations form the body...

When you are ready, gently open your eyes if they have been closed, and take in your surroundings, letting go of this brief practice.