

Healthy Living

Yoga Tips To Help You Keep Calm And Stress-Free

(NAPSA)—Life can be stressful. Whether it's our jobs, family, relationships, holiday craziness, mishaps or finances—stress can be there. But we CAN manage it. Whether it's simple measures you take daily to reduce your stress levels in a matter of minutes or voluntary insurance to help provide cash benefits when you experience an illness or injury, there are ways to keep calm and stress-free.

The Aflac Duck partnered with celebrity yoga instructor and expert Kristin McGee to share simple ways to relieve stress this season:

• **Be present.** Yoga helps you stay present and in the moment, and that is the best present you can give yourself or anyone during the holidays.

• **Preventative.** The more range of motion you have in your joints, the easier it is to move freely and stay injury-free. Yoga keeps you flexible and helps prevent injuries.

• **Just breathe.** Breathing is essential to yoga. Breathe in and out of your nose using slow, deep, steady breaths. Inhale on a count of four then exhale on a count of four. This calms the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers cortisol levels and stress.

• **Beat the blues.** Backbends open the heart and keep our spirits lifted. Try opening up your chest and taking a deep full breath to boost your mood.

• **You and only you.** Never compare yourself to anyone else or compete with anyone during yoga class. In yoga, you can learn to stand on your own two feet, which makes you more confident and helps you stress less about the choices you make.



Even 10 to 15 minutes of yoga a day can help you relieve stress, stay energized and better enjoy time with your family and friends.

• **Focus.** Focusing helps you de-stress. When the mind is scattered in a million directions, it's hard to stay calm, centered and stress-free. Find a spot to focus on or balance in a tree pose as you watch your breath and notice the mind and body releasing stress.

• **Fitness.** One of the best ways to stay fit all year long is yoga. All you need is your body, breath and a yoga mat or towel.

• **Strength.** Yoga helps build strength in the muscles and the bones.

• **Flexibility.** Yoga opens up the body like no other form of exercise. Between the postures themselves and the emphasis on the breath, your flexibility and mobility will get better and better with yoga.

• **Sleep.** Yoga can help you rest easier by letting go of excess tension in the mind and body. Lie on your back with feet together and knees open to the sides like a butterfly shape, place your hands on your belly, watch your breath and let your body relax into a deep state of rest.

• **Circulation.** Yoga stimulates the lymphatic system, which keeps the fluids moving throughout the body, which can help you fight off colds and the flu.

• **Go “Om.”** The next time you're feeling frazzled, let out a giant “Om.” The sound stabilizes your nervous system and centers you.

• **Stretch it out.** When you're tense, your body stiffens and makes you uptight. Lift your arms above you and stretch your fingers to the ceiling.

• **Twist and shout.** Twists release tension whether you're standing, seated or lying down.

• **Hang upside down.** Doing a standing-forward bend or downward dog lets the blood flow to your brain to help you think better and stress less.

• **Moving meditation.** Take a walk outside and watch your steps or link your breath to your movement with a few sun salutations.

There are many relaxing postures in yoga that open up the body and release tension and stress. McGee likes to say, “A downward dog a day keeps the doctor away” because practicing yoga keeps you strong, flexible, focused, relaxed and more open in your body and mind.

McGee recently partnered with Aflac, the leading provider of voluntary insurance in the United States, to help people understand that like yoga, voluntary insurance helps provide peace of mind. To see the entertaining Aflac Duck try yoga, visit Aflac's YouTube channel at youtube.com/aflac.

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