

Connecting to the Source Within: Adaptive Yoga for Caregivers & Community Supports

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List of Resources

[Adaptive Yoga Classes in Denver \(for survivors of an injury to the brain\)](#)

Samadhi Center for Yoga, www.samadhiyoga.net

Class Name

Adaptive Yoga

Class Description & Logistics

Adaptive Yoga is for almost anyone with a mobility restriction, including those with Spinal Cord Injuries, Amputated Limbs, Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy, Brain Injuries and Arthritis. In this class, yoga postures are made accessible to all students by adapting poses, using props and hands-on support when needed. Through breath, movement, mindfulness and relaxation, we support the mind-body connection and explore the sensation of subtle energy in the body. Students are welcome but not required to bring a partner, friend or aide to assist them. We also have assistants available to help.

Samadhi has generously donated the studio space for this class since 2010, so that our classes are affordable and more widely accessible. The first class is always free! A month series is just \$20 (Thursdays from 1:30-3pm) or \$8 if for drop-in. Cash or checks to "Adaptive Bodyworks" please. Financial assistance is available for those in need.

Please register for class with the contact information below as space is limited.

Liza Morgan | lizalmorgan@gmail.com | 720-810-0182

Ashley Curran | ashleyjillcurran@gmail.com | 303-506-4154

The River Yoga, www.weseektheriver.com

Class Name

Yin Yoga *LYB Friendly [LYB = Love Your Brain]

Class Description & Logistics

Yin is a deceptively subtle and highly accessible form of yoga that is valuable for health, rehabilitation, performance, and longevity. Set at a slower pace, this class explores a series of long-held, passive floor poses that mainly work the lower part of the body— by lengthening tendons and smoothing the fascia pathways. Individual postures are held for approximately five minutes with the support of props as needed. In a world full of over stimulation and doing, a yin practice can lead to more inner stillness and physical well being. All levels.

*Love Your Brain friendly classes are taught by LYB certified teachers and are perfect for yogis that have experienced TBIs. LYB six week series graduates can take this class for \$5! Payment must be taken at studio at the time of class.

The instructor for this class is Lauralyn Sullivan. Lauralyn's teaching style is described as compassionate, intuitive, engaging, and creative. Lauralyn teaches from her heart creating playful and engaging yoga themes centered around compassion.

Class Name

\$5 Yoga Fundamentals *LYB Friendly [LYB = Love Your Brain]

Class Description & Logistics

An alignment-based and slower-paced class for first time student or beginner yogis. Instructors will provide posture demonstrations and modifications. No prior yoga experience necessary and touching your toes is not a prerequisite! This class is also great for yogis with experience looking to build a stronger foundation or revisit the fundamentals. All levels. Great for beginners!

*Love Your Brain friendly classes are taught by LYB certified teachers and are perfect for yogis have experienced TBIs.

The instructor for this class is Susanna Nilsson. Susanna's teaching style is described as supportive, introspective, and philosophical. Susanna believes the human experience is amplified through the practice of yoga. A mindful practice allows us to access our inner selves which serves us with strength, dignity and grace to use off our mats. Through introspection and movement, Susanna hopes to facilitate an environment for personal growth and creativity, leading to a strong sense of self and an improved connection to those around you.

Denver Yoga Studios that offer regular Yin Yoga, Restorative Yoga, and Yoga Nidra Classes
(all great for caregivers and community supports!)

- **Karma Yoga Center** (South Pearl District in Denver), www.karmayogacenter.com
- **Kindness Yoga** (multiple locations in Denver, Golden, Aurora, and Lone Tree), www.kindnesscollective.com
- **Mudra Yoga Studio** (Holly & Leetsdale and Platt Park in Denver), www.mudrayogastudio.com
- **Samadhi Center for Yoga** (Uptown, Golden Triangle, and Englewood locations), www.samadhiyoga.net

Online Yoga Classes

- **Yoga Download** (many Denver and Colorado-based yoga teachers are featured), www.yogadownload.com
- **Glo Yoga, Meditation, Pilates**, www.glo.com

Yoga and Meditation Apps

- **Down Dog**, www.downdogapp.com
- **Daily Yoga**, www.dailyyoga.com
- **5 Minute Yoga** (available from Google Play or Apple App Store)
- **Insight Timer**, www.insighttimer.com
- **Stop, Breathe & Think**, www.stopbreathethink.com
- **Calm**, www.calm.com
- **Headspace**, www.headspace.com

An Introduction to Three-Part Yogic Breath by Christie Pitko

<https://www.doyouyoga.com/an-introduction-to-three-part-yogic-breath/>

“Breathing in, I calm body and mind. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is the only moment.” ~Thich Nhat Hanh

On average, we take around 23,000 breaths per day. Much of this breathing can easily go unnoticed due to the activities of daily human life. What if we became more acquainted with our inhales and exhales? Pranayama or yogic breathing is one of the eight limbs of yoga. Generally defined as breath control, “prana” refers to life force or vital energy. “Ayama” means to extend or to lengthen. Performed regularly, pranayama can balance the mental, physical, and spiritual bodies.

Three-part breath or dirgha pranayama is an accessible introduction to this transformative practice. The benefits of dirgha pranayama include:

- Calms the mind and body, reducing stress and anxiety
- Promotes full and complete breathing
- Increases oxygen supply to the blood
- Helps keep the lungs healthy
- Releases muscular tension
- Prepares for deeper meditation

A Beginner’s Journey into Three-Part Yogic Breath

Sit on a blanket in Sukhasana or Easy Cross-Legged Pose. Root your sit-bones and feel your spine grow long as you lightly extend from the crown of the head. Soften your heart and your shoulders.

Place your hand over your navel and take a slow, deep breath into your belly. Feel the belly inflate like a balloon as you inhale, and deflate as you exhale. Practice this for five breaths.

Move your hand two to three inches above your navel to your rib cage. Feel the ribs expand as you inhale, and retract as you exhale. Practice this for five breaths.

Place your hand below your collarbone, at the center of your chest, and inhale. Feel the chest spread as you breathe in, and withdraw on an exhale. Practice this for five breaths.

Linking and Expanding Your Three-Part Yogic Breath

You may continue to use your hand as a guide or try the breathing exercise without. Breathe into the belly, feeling it grow. Keep inhaling as the breath expands to the ribs, and then the chest. Pause for a moment, completely filled with air.

Exhale from the chest, then the ribs, and then the belly. Pause.

Continue the same sequence, inhaling to the belly, the ribs, the chest, and so forth. Try for five to ten rounds. Work towards more repetitions if you feel comfortable.

Once familiar with the exercise, add the breath to the back of the body. For example, as you inhale into the belly, also feel the breath expand to the kidneys. Continue inhaling to the back of the rib cage and the space between the shoulder blades. Exhale shoulder blades, back of ribs, then kidneys.

Notes and Recommendations

Witness your breath blossom without force or strain. It is useful to work on an empty stomach; finish eating two to three hours before you begin. Do not start a breathing practice if you experience asthma, shortness of breath, or have a heart condition.

Three-part yogic breathing is excellent for meditation preparation and best before asana. Invoke this exercise when you feel stressed or when your breath feels constricted. By cultivating a regular pranayama practice, your body and mind become more conscious of the present moment.

Meditation for Beginners: 20 Practical Tips for Understanding the Mind by Leo Babauta
<https://zenhabits.net/meditation-guide/>

The most important habit I've formed in the last 10 years of forming habits is meditation. Hands down, bar none.

Meditation has helped me to form all my other habits, it's helped me to become more peaceful, more focused, less worried about discomfort, more appreciative and attentive to everything in my life. I'm far from perfect, but it has helped me come a long way.

Probably most importantly, it has helped me understand my own mind. Before I started meditating, I never thought about what was going on inside my head — it would just happen, and I would follow its commands like an automaton. These days, all of that still happens, but more and more, I am aware of what's going on. I can make a choice about whether to follow the commands. I understand myself better (not completely, but better), and that has given me increased flexibility and freedom.

So ... I highly recommend this habit. And while I'm not saying it's easy, you can start small and get better and better as you practice. Don't expect to be good at first — that's why it's called "practice"! These tips aren't aimed at helping you to become an expert ... they should help you get started and keep going. You don't have to implement them all at once — try a few, come back to this article, try one or two more.

1. **Sit for just two minutes.** This will seem ridiculously easy, to just meditate for two minutes. That's perfect. Start with just two minutes a day for a week. If that goes well, increase by another two minutes and do that for a week. If all goes well, by increasing just a little at a time, you'll be meditating for 10 minutes a day in the 2nd month, which is amazing! But start small first.
2. **Do it first thing each morning.** It's easy to say, "I'll meditate every day," but then forget to do it. Instead, set a reminder for every morning when you get up, and put a note that says "meditate" somewhere where you'll see it.
3. **Don't get caught up in the how — just do.** Most people worry about where to sit, how to sit, what cushion to use ... this is all nice, but it's not that important to get started. Start just by sitting on a chair, or on your couch. Or on your bed. If you're comfortable on the ground, sit cross-legged. It's just for two minutes at first anyway, so just sit. Later you can worry about optimizing it so you'll be comfortable for longer, but in the beginning it doesn't matter much, just sit somewhere quiet and comfortable.
4. **Check in with how you're feeling.** As you first settle into your meditation session, simply check to see how you're feeling. How does your body feel? What is the quality of your mind? Busy? Tired? Anxious? See whatever you're bringing to this meditation session as completely OK.
5. **Count your breaths.** Now that you're settled in, turn your attention to your breath. Just place the attention on your breath as it comes in, and follow it through your nose all the way down to your lungs. Try counting "one" as you take in the first breath, then "two" as you breathe out. Repeat this to the count of 10, then start again at one.

6. **Come back when you wander.** Your mind will wander. This is an almost absolute certainty. There's no problem with that. When you notice your mind wandering, smile, and simply gently return to your breath. Count "one" again, and start over. You might feel a little frustration, but it's perfectly OK to not stay focused, we all do it. This is the practice, and you won't be good at it for a little while.
7. **Develop a loving attitude.** When you notice thoughts and feelings arising during meditation, as they will, look at them with a friendly attitude. See them as friends, not intruders or enemies. They are a part of you, though not all of you. Be friendly and not harsh. Don't worry too much that you're doing it wrong. You will worry you're doing it wrong. That's OK, we all do. You're not doing it wrong. There's no perfect way to do it, just be happy you're doing it.
8. **Don't worry about clearing the mind.** Lots of people think meditation is about clearing your mind, or stopping all thoughts. It's not. This can sometimes happen, but it's not the "goal" of meditation. If you have thoughts, that's normal. We all do. Our brains are thought factories, and we can't just shut them down. Instead, just try to practice focusing your attention, and practice some more when your mind wanders.
9. **Stay with whatever arises.** When thoughts or feelings arise, and they will, you might try staying with them awhile. Yes, I know I said to return to the breath, but after you practice that for a week, you might also try staying with a thought or feeling that arises. We tend to want to avoid feelings like frustration, anger, anxiety ... but an amazingly useful meditation practice is to stay with the feeling for awhile. Just stay, and be curious.
10. **Get to know yourself.** This practice isn't just about focusing your attention, it's about learning how your mind works. What's going on inside there? It's murky, but by watching your mind wander, get frustrated, avoid difficult feelings ... you can start to understand yourself.
11. **Become friends with yourself.** As you get to know yourself, do it with a friendly attitude instead of one of criticism. You're getting to know a friend. Smile and give yourself love.
12. **Do a body scan.** Another thing you can do, once you become a little better at following your breath, is focus your attention on one body part at a time. Start at the soles of your feet — how do those feel? Slowly move to your toes, the tops of your feet, your ankles, all the way to the top of your head.
13. **Notice the light, sounds, energy.** Another place to put your attention, again, after you've practice with your breath for at least a week, is the light all around you. Just keep your eyes on one spot, and notice the light in the room you're in. Another day, just focus on noticing sounds. Another day, try to notice the
14. energy in the room all around you (including light and sounds).
15. **Really commit yourself.** Don't just say, "Sure, I'll try this for a couple days." Really commit yourself to this. In your mind, be locked in, for at least a month.
16. **You can do it anywhere.** If you're traveling or something comes up in the morning, you can do meditation in your office. In the park. During your commute. As you walk somewhere. Sitting meditation is the best place to start, but in truth, you're practicing for this kind of mindfulness in your entire life.

17. **Follow guided meditation.** If it helps, you can try following guided meditations to start with. My wife is using Tara Brach's guided meditations, and she finds them very helpful.
18. **Check in with friends.** While I like meditating alone, you can do it with your spouse or child or a friend. Or just make a commitment with a friend to check in every morning after meditation. It might help you stick with it for longer.
19. **Find a community.** Even better, find a community of people who are meditating and join them. This might be a Zen or Tibetan community near you (for example), where you go and meditate with them. Or find an online group and check in with them and ask questions, get support, encourage others. My Sea Change Program has a community like that.
20. **Smile when you're done.** When you're finished with your two minutes, smile. Be grateful that you had this time to yourself, that you stuck with your commitment, that you showed yourself that you're trustworthy, where you took the time to get to know yourself and make friends with yourself. That's an amazing two minutes of your life.

Meditation isn't always easy or even peaceful. But it has truly amazing benefits, and you can start today, and continue for the rest of your life.