



Stretching Breaks for Personal Sanity

Minimal Movements And Reflection For The Workplace



Why and How?

Why introduce stretching?

- ▲ Increased sitting decreases flexibility, blood circulation and concentration among other things
- ▲ Body posture through work on (laptop-)computers is less than optimal – even in ergonomic work spaces
- ▲ The earlier we work in mini-breaks into our daily rhythm, the better for our
 - Concentration
 - Performance
 - Well-being

How to implement it

- ▲ All stretching movements can be done by everybody - no preparation nor experience needed
- ▲ No special clothes necessary
- ▲ No special props necessary besides a chair (no rollers)
- ▲ Some space needed but can be in meeting room or in offices
- ▲ Can be done for most levels of disability or pregnancy

Sitting for an average of 40 hours a week has the following impact on the human body:

- 100+% increase in risk of diabetes and cardiovascular events
- 90% drop in enzymes that help break down fat
- Calorie-burning drops to 1 calorie per minute
- Level of good cholesterol drops by 20% after sitting 2 hours!!!!

Break 1: Breathing, Hands and Shoulders

Purpose:

- a) Introduce breathing as a first – but more powerful than given credit for – step.
- b) Ensure stretching is understood not only to happen in the gym/while doing sporty things

▲ Sitting with straight back at front edge of chair, hands loosely on top of the legs – biceps should be hanging straight-ish next to body; chin back but level; shoulders drop; feet firmly planted hip width. Explain “stomach-breathing” (hand against tummy – push hand away), close eyes. Calm breathing in and out. Concentrate on breathing. When mind wanders, bring it back to breathing. Own rhythm – deep into lungs – try not to lift shoulders or breath into chest.

▲ Sitting all the way back in the chair. Open palms, flip wrist and turn the fingertips to the back of the chair and bring palm down to the seat – all the way. Feel the stretch through the wrist and the forearm.

▲ Chair raised hands – get taller, leave shoulders low, increase distance between shoulders and ears; shoulder blades slide down back. Interlacing fingers and turn the palms up.

▲ Chair Eagle: Underarms parallel to floor left elbow into right elbow, inner palms touch, move up elbow, moving hands NOT towards heads but straight up slowly to feel stretch in shoulders. Three times hold it extended. Breathe. Switch right elbow to be on top – same. Breathe. Do both again with the legs winding around each other, too. Top left elbow with top left knee

Break 2: Breathing, Back and Legs

Purpose:

- a) back problems are everybody's problem – hence stretch it out – often
- b) Hamstrings really shorten in the constant sitting position – need to be challenged

- ▲ Breathing – count to four while inhaling; exhale normal. Few times. Then count to four when exhaling. Inhaling normal. Then inhale and exhale on four.
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- ▲ Chair Cat-Cow: sit front of chair, inhale, arch spine and roll shoulders down and back (shoulder blades to back for cow. Exhale round your spine and drop chin to chest, shoulders and head forward for cat. Move between both with breath.
 - ▲ Puppy Dog on chair: aim: shoulders and head below hip – straight back. After each deep breath – try a bit further. Breathe into the point where you feel the stretch
 - ▲ Chair spinal twist: Sit sideways on chair – spin torso to grab back of chair as parallel as possible with both hands. Breathe. Do three times – then switch sides.
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- ▲ One leg stretch from sitting on chair – top of sit bones – lift chest – bend forward while breathing. Try to bring chest on top of thigh. No rounding of the back. No touching of toes needed.
 - ▲ Chair pigeon: Left ankle on top of right knee – gently push down with left hand onto left knee to further the stretch. Minimum three breaths. Switch.

Break 3: Breathing, Eyes and Scalp

Purpose:

- a) Regenerate the eyes as undervalued resource that is overtaxed in this digital age
- b) Release any unconscious held tension in the scalp to reduce headaches (and wrinkles)

▲ Quadratic breathing (rest as before)

- ▲ Open eyes. Take off glasses. Take head level to look over shoulder all the way to the right and try to see your left shoulder with your eyes (will not work, but that is the direction). Breathe. Three counts of breathing. Then turn head left – eyes to right shoulder,...
 - ▲ Take chin to chest, take eyes to see the ceiling/sky. Breath. 3 counts. Take chin to ceiling – stretch that throat. Eyes to tip of nose. Breathe. 3 counts
 - ▲ Rub hands against each other really fast to warm them up – then close eyes and hold the warm heel of hand against your eyelids. Breathe.
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▲ Close eyes. Straight sitting, arms on side, hands on legs. Let shoulders drop. Try to have your facial skin drop to the floor. Release the tension of your ears,... cheeks,... jaw,... tongue,...forehead,... Breathe. 3 rounds quadratic breathing.