

PRACTICAL EXERCISES • NUTRITION • MINDFULNESS • LIFESTYLE & WELLNESS

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UNVEIL INNER HARMONY

Kesari
on MEDITATION

YOGA *for*
AUTISM

ECOSOMATICS &

yoga

MASTERING *the*
SLEEPING
buddha

POWER *of*
UTKATA
KONASANA

REACTIVITY *in*
MEDITATION

EMBODIED YOGA
EXPERIENCE



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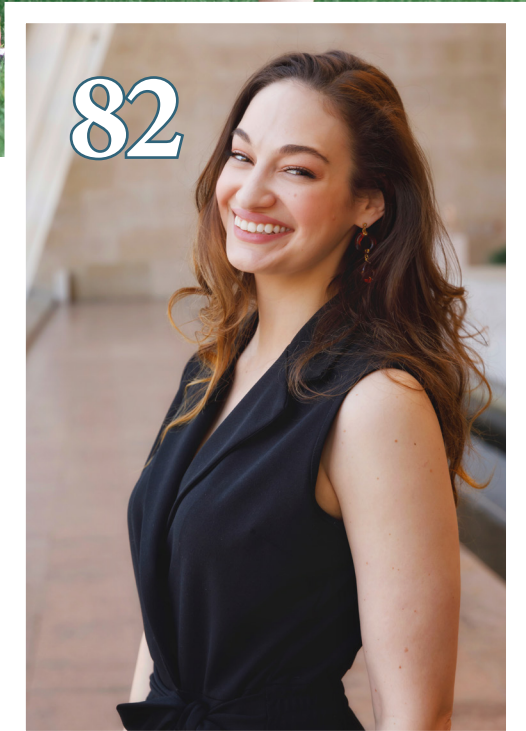
Model: **Suni Gargaro**
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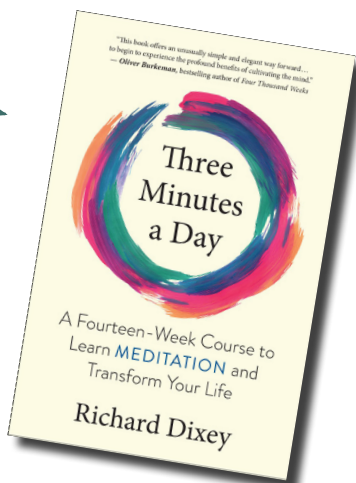
Kesari, a meditation expert, coach, and healer with 18 years of experience, shares the profound benefits of meditation, shedding light on its while emphasising her unique approach to teaching meditation,

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42 PEACE IS POSSIBLE IN THESE RESTLESS TIMES

Carol Trevor, emphasises the need to slow down and reset, particularly through the practice of Restorative Yoga, which helps counteract burnout, ease the nervous system, and foster inner peace and harmony.



BWY SPECIAL FEATURE

Peace is possible in THESE RESTLESS TIMES

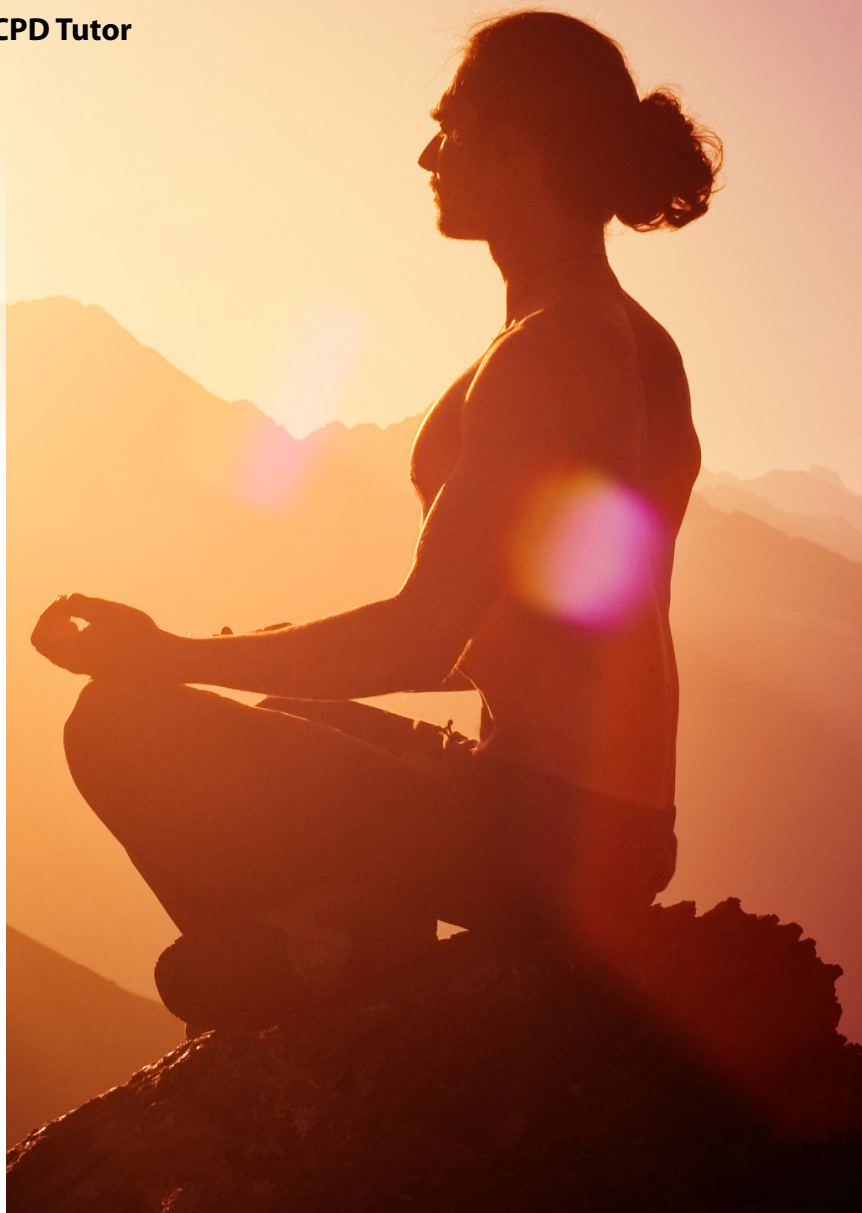
Words: Carol Trevor, British Wheel of Yoga CPD Tutor

There is a bigger need than ever now to slow down, pause and reset. The busyness of our everyday life, the constant stream of news, social media updates and stress resulting from world events can be overwhelming.

Our go-go culture comes with an increased risk of burnout as our nervous system is constantly taxed and we can find ourselves with limited reserves to respond to unexpected events or additional responsibilities.

Restorative Yoga is a way of pressing the pause button. As in the ancient yoga texts, this slower, gentle practice invites us to drop down from the head to the heart, from accumulated tension to release. It is a deeply nourishing and soothing practice that allows us to reconnect with the inner peace and harmony within us all.

It can be especially helpful during times of transition such as becoming a parent, changing career, the menopause, moving house, or during loss and grief. It can also support people in chronic pain or who are suffering from any stress-related condition of our time.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The skilful use of props supports us in a way that creates comfort and ease, as we experience yoga postures for longer than in a regular class.

We are able to rest and rejuvenate, returning to balance and contentment as gravity and the props do the work. The bolsters, blocks and blankets allow the body to release musculoskeletal, mental and emotional tension. No effort is required. We can simply be in each pose and 'receive' rather than 'do' yoga.

As we settle deeply, we shift naturally from an aroused sympathetic state to our peaceful parasympathetic mode. These are the branches of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) responsible for regulating our involuntary muscles and organs so that we can respond comfortably to different situations as needed.

BENEFITS

How do you feel during a restful holiday or time off? The most immediate benefits of restorative yoga embody this.

We feel refreshed, vibrant, relaxed and open-minded. We see things in perspective, rather than instantly worrying. We empathise with others more and are kinder to ourselves. We can enjoy being creative and intuitive, and we often have a renewed appreciation for the simple, important things in life. In short, we feel more like ourselves, present in our minds and bodies rather than anxious and agitated.



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On a physiological level, coming out of chronic 'fight or flight' and into 'rest and digest' is invaluable for the regulation of all the body's systems, functions and adaptability. This includes our respiration, heart rate variability, blood pressure, digestion, elimination, hormone balance, fertility, immune system, sleep quality and our emotional wellbeing.

There are restorative backbends, forward bends, twists, inversions, prone and lateral poses, each with

unique benefits that nourish particular organs while soothing the nervous system. There are many wonderful versions of *savasana* or 'corpse' pose.

If relaxing and making time for yourself does not feel easy (and you are not alone here), you may begin your practice by giving yourself permission to pause. Welcome patience, allowing your body and mind time to settle, release built-up tension and replenish. The benefits touch not only us, but everyone else in our lives.

LESS IS MORE: THREE POSES TO HELP US COME TO CALM

This restorative sequence is beneficial at any time of day. Even just one of these poses can be a whole practice in itself. Find a quiet, warm place with soft lighting. Treat the placement of props like a beautiful ritual. When chilly, cosy socks and layers are perfect.

If you are short of time, go straight to the last pose. Your body, mind and heart will thank you for it.

"On a physiological level, coming out of chronic 'fight or flight' and into 'rest and digest' is invaluable for the regulation of all the body's systems, functions and adaptability".

1. GENTLE BACK BEND

A simple grounding pose that counteracts our 'hunched' or forward-head daily posture, especially if we work sitting at a desk. It extends the spine, gives space for the ribcage, heart, lungs and abdominal organs. The jaw and hip flexors release. We breathe with ease and feel gently energised.

This pose is not for pregnancy or any spinal injuries or discomfort.

- Take a firm (yoga) blanket and fold it three times. As you come to recline, have your pelvis on your mat and the upper edge of the blanket (the rounded side) at the lower edge of your shoulder blades. Feel the span across the lower front ribs.
- The feet are hips-width or more apart and pigeon-toed (toes in, heels out). Allow the knees to fall inwards to support each other, so that the legs can let go. If the knees don't meet, feel free to wrap a blanket around your knees and thighs.
- Have the armpit spaces free, with some distance between the arms and the sides of the torso. This also helps with low mood. Place something soft in the palms of the hands. This feels lovely and is soothing for the nervous system.
- If the pose feels too 'open', place a soft pillow, cushion or blanket on your torso for comfort. Cover your eyes or forehead with an eye pillow or scarf. Enjoy the sense of grounding through the back body, and spaciousness through the front body.
- Set a timer for 3-10 minutes. Surrender. To exit, move very slowly backwards until your pelvis is on the blanket. Pause. Roll to your side of choice. Pause again for some breaths. Gently come up to sitting, letting your head be the last part to rise and keep the eyes closed if this feels good. Enjoy some breaths here.





2. SUPPORTED COBBLER'S POSE

Creates space for the chest, heart centre and abdominal organs and enhances respiration. Particularly helpful during menstruation, pregnancy, perimenopause, menopause, and for uterus health, prostate, bladder and digestive issues. Supports sleep quality.

This pose is not good for knee or hip injuries, so you may consider straightening the legs.

- Place a firm bolster (or alternatively use a yoga mat wrapped in a blanket) at a 45-degree angle on yoga bricks or blocks as shown, or against another stable surface such as a sofa or firm beanbag. Ensure your lower back is flush to the bottom of the bolster and sit on a blanket if needed (if your tailbone feels sensitive).
- Tuck a blanket or soft pillow under the

tops of your shoulders, around your neck and to support your head, so that the chin is lower than the forehead. This quiets the mind. The breastbone is lifted.

- Two rolled blankets, bolsters or rollers support your thighs - from the very tops of your thighs down to your shins. Your feet are some distance in front of your torso and the knees are off the ground, not to your full range of motion. There is no stretching. Wrap a towel or blanket around your ankles for support and grounding if you wish.
- Rest your arms and hands on two cushions or pillows at your sides, elbows lower than hands. This releases the shoulders, collarbones and upper chest.
- Cover your whole body with a blanket or light cover. Set a timer and stay here for 10-20 minutes.
- To exit, use your hands to help bring your knees slowly towards centre. Place the soles of your feet on the ground and have some breaths here. When ready, roll carefully to your side of choice, pause, and rise slowly to sitting. Pause again, bathed in prana.



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3. SAVASANA WITH LEGS ELEVATED

Deep rest and renewal. A sanctuary. Slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure. Helpful if you experience non-specific lower back discomfort. Provides relief for tired legs and poor circulation.

This pose is not for pregnancy.

- Lie on your back with the legs hips-width apart, parallel and neutral (not rolling outwards). Have two large supports (e.g., sofa cushions, pillows or bolsters) under the lower legs to elevate them. The upper edge supports the back of the knees.
- Tuck a blanket or soft pillow under the tops of your shoulders, around your neck and to support your head, so that the chin is lowered. If you like, make a 'hood' or cocoon for the head with a blanket or scarf.
- Support the wrist joints with blocks, books or cushions. This allows the shoulders and collarbones to release and avoids any overextension of the elbow joints.
- Cover your whole body with a blanket.
- Set a timer and stay for 20-30 minutes. Welcome home.
- To exit, allow the knees to come very slowly towards your torso one by one, roll to your side of choice and pause, supporting your head with your hand. Gently come to a comfortable seated position and enjoy the peaceful, warm glow of the practice before continuing with your day or evening.



Carol Trevor began practising yoga over 30 years ago. She was introduced to restorative yoga through the Iyengar tradition and also studies with Judith Hanson Lasater. She contributes to yoga teacher trainings and is a CPD Tutor for the British Wheel of Yoga. The BWY's Restorative Yoga Training Module for teachers begins on 28 October 2023 online: <https://www.bwy.org.uk/national/event/2553/> or visit www.yogacarol.co.uk