

Twenty-Minute Yoga/Stretching Session

Due to the chaotic nature of prison release scheduling, it is often convenient to offer mindful movement as inmates arrive, allowing latecomers to join in. Have the inmates lie down on the mats in "corpse pose" and practice completely releasing and relaxing the body. If there is time, a body scan is helpful.

1. Windshield wiper: Lying on the back, arms out in a comfortable "T" position, knees bent, feet on the floor, drop knees slowly to one side, with the head turning in the opposite direction. Coordinate with the breath: as knees come up — in breath, knees drop – outbreath. Keep shoulders on the mat. 5 to 10 times on each side.
2. Hug-knee stretch: Lying on back, lengthen left leg and flex foot. Bring right leg into the chest 80%, wrapping the hands around the knee. Make small circles with the bent knee in one direction; switch directions. Lift flexed left leg so foot is parallel with the ceiling, bringing right knee further into the chest. Bend left knee and drop left foot to the floor. Cross right foot over left thigh. Bring right hand through the "triangle" formed and grasp left hand in back of left knee. Pull left leg towards the body. Release after 10 seconds. Repeat on other side.
3. Hug both knees: Bring both knees to the chest and wrap hands around the knees. Gently rock side to side, massaging the lower back. 20 seconds.
4. Half-bridge: Bend knees, bring feet to the mat and lift hips up with body weight on the shoulders and the feet. Coordinate with the breath lifting 5 times.
5. Half-moon and fold pose: Come to standing with feet slightly apart, arms raised. Join hands by lacing fingers, index fingers pointing up. Gently sway a few times and then bend to the right as far as comfortable. Hold for a few breaths. Move to the left. Hold for a few breaths. Come to center and then to a small back-bend. Two breathes & come to center, release hands; bring arms out to the sides as body moves forward and folds over parallel to the ground. Knees are slightly bent. As fold continues, hands drop to the ground or hands hold the elbows. Hold the fold for a few breaths, arching the back as you rise, head coming up last. Repeat.

6. Shoulder rolls and neck rotation: Lift the shoulders up to the ears, rotate them forward and do this in one direction 10 times. Reverse directions. Let chin come to the chest letting the back of the neck lengthen. 10 seconds. Raise chin up bringing back of the head to the back of the neck. 10 seconds. Left ear to the left shoulder. 10 seconds. Right ear to the right shoulder. 10 seconds. Do a smooth rotation in one direction 5x. Rotate opposite side. 5x.
7. Arm stretches: Lift left arm up, bend elbow and let the left hand "pat the back". Place right hand on the left elbow to encourage left hand further down the back. Hold for 5 seconds. Opposite side. Hands clasp each other behind the back, knees bend, fold over and bring fists up towards the ceiling. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat.
8. Cat-Cow: Come down to "table pose" with hands directly under the shoulders and knees directly under the hips. Breathe in with head coming up and stomach dropping. Breath out as back arches, air is forced out and stomach is brought up high into the body. 5 – 10 times. Practice balance by coming back into table and bringing the left arm straight out and away from the body. Lift the right leg straight out and away from the body. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat on opposite sides.
9. Cobra: Come back to the mat, face down. Left ear to the mat. Bring hands close to the shoulders with elbows tucked close to the ribs. Lift up keeping the stomach on the ground. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat starting with opposite ear on the mat.
10. Child's Pose: Bend knees and bring them to the outside of the mat with big toes touching. Fold over at the hips with hands extended, letting chest come to the floor.
11. Spinal Twist: Lie completely on left side, knees bent, arms straight out in front. Lift right arm up and over the body, turning the head to watch it land on the opposite side of the body. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.
12. Corpse Pose: Finish by laying in corpse pose for 2 or 3 minutes or as time allows.