

# Yoga for Emotional Wellness

## What is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient (3,000+ years old) meditative mindfulness practice that connects breath with movement as a way to focus the mind and heal the body. Yoga is for every body and everyone. Despite what we see in pictures around us, yoga is not about being flexible or learning to put your foot behind your head. It is about calming the mind and learning to observe and respond to what is happening to you, rather than just automatically reacting.

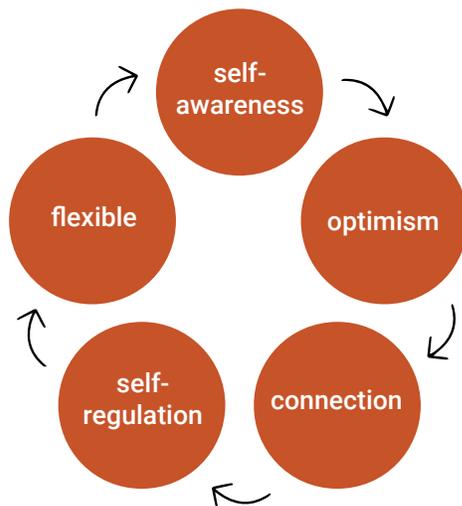
## Why Yoga for Emotional Wellness?

It has been said that we hold our issues in our tissues.

Stress, anxiety, sadness, depression, embarrassment – all of these emotions have a physiological component and, when we experience a lot of them, they can leave us feeling physically (and emotionally) out of balance.

People over time have found that different yoga poses have functions that can help us regulate our emotions. As we calm our bodies, we also calm our minds.

Research is now also supporting that yoga and mindfulness practices activate our ventromedial prefrontal cortex (associated with tempering worry and with our ability to observe) and produces an increase in a chemical called GABA. GABA is the same chemical targeted with common anti-anxiety medications!



## How Does Yoga Help?

Yoga builds resilience. Resilience is not about the absence of stress or negative reactions but rather about our ability to bounce back from challenges. Picture a rubber band rather than a brittle twig – THAT is resilience.

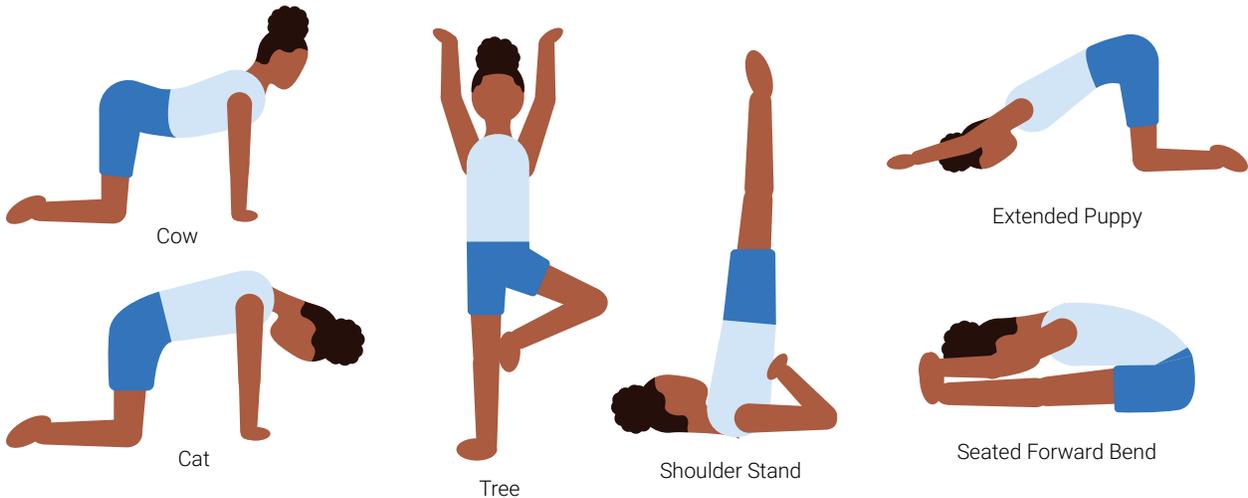
There are 5 basic components to resilience, as pictured on the left. Yoga helps us build self-awareness, connection (with self and others), and self-regulation – 3 of the key components of resilience.

## General Practices for Emotional Wellness

- Set aside 3 minutes – Really, just 3!
- Start where you are. No judgments.
- Focus on the breath – unless it creates additional anxiety.
- Use a mantra or phrase to hold your mind – for example: “I am peace.”

### Calming Yoga Poses (good for stress or anxiety)

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### Energizing Yoga Poses (good for fatigue or depression)

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