

Some yoga practices to help you balance your energy and to relax
(first three from Baby Yoga by Françoise Freedman)

Heart meditation to release negative emotions

If you feel you are experiencing a range of unwanted emotions or if you find it hard to go back to sleep after a night feed:

- A) Acknowledge any distress. Feel it. Say to yourself what you feel and experience it in your body
- B) Think of the opposite, positive emotion. Name it out loud, hear yourself saying it. Do this several times. You may find it hard to do this but persevere.
- C) Focus on your heart centre. Close your eyes and with each out-breath allow this positive emotion to expand in your heart, in any shape, form or colour. Watch it expand and allow it to be secured in your heart space before you open your eyes again.

Glimpsing the blue sky above the worries

With each out-breath let go of a worry. Let go of the total heap of worries of your day/life at the moment, working through your worry cloud.

With each in-breath, catch sight of the blue sky above the worry cloud. Feel the sun and warmth of this space above the cloud and know that it is there for you.

To help when my baby cries and I don't know what to do

If you don't know what to do to stop your baby crying (and you have done all the obvious things such as making sure your baby is not hungry or needs a change):

- A) Become aware of your breath – it is probably fast and shallow. Breathe out deeply a few times, sounding it as 'Haah'
 - B) Relax your abdomen and breathe in deeply to your abdomen, several times. Breathe out fully and feel the flow of your breath.
- Return to your baby, you will feel calmer and more able to help.

Where in my body do I feel my baby's crying?

Your baby's crying releases stress hormones in your body. In other words, you are programmed to respond to your baby's crying. This is appropriate but you need to be able to release the tension afterwards so that it is not stored there. Just notice in your body where you feel your baby's crying – where does it go to? If you are aware of a knot of tension in this area then with each out-breath allow the tension here to dissolve. If you wish you can breathe in to this area a lovely warm, tension-releasing colour. Keep noticing how this area feels and allow it to be balanced throughout your day and night.

Clearing 'household head'

You know that feeling when your head feels muzzy from tiredness and too many demands on you? Try the following 'head clearing' technique:

- A) Visualise all the holes in the head i.e. the eyes, ears, nose and mouth, as well as all the pores on the skin and scalp all over the head.
- B) Imagine that you are breathing in and out through all these holes at the same time. Breathe fresh cleansing air right into the middle of your head, from all sides, then breathe out the tiredness and muzziness from the centre of the head back to the outside. Repeat a few times until you start to feel the head clearing.

Relaxed walking

As parents, we often spend quite a lot of time walking around fairly slowly with a toddler or pushing a pushchair. Get something out of this daily activity for yourself by walking in a relaxed way:

- A) Watch your posture: check the whole of the back of the body feels relaxed, the neck is long, the top of the head goes up towards the sky, the front of the body feels open so you can breathe well, the shoulders are moving downwards away from the ears.
- B) As you walk, place the heel down first of all then allow the rest of the feet. Keep the body relaxed as you walk.
- C) Be aware of your breath as you walk. If you are going slowly, breathe out each time you take a step, thinking of each step as a way of relaxing. If you are going faster, find a rhythm to your walking e.g. taking 3 steps on the in-breath and 6 steps on the out-breath. Remember the out-breath is the relaxing breath so try to make this longer than the in-breath, or at least no shorter.

Instant relaxation technique

Lie on your back, if comfortable with your legs straight and your arms close by your sides.

Breathe in and deliberately tense up your toes, feet, shins, knees, thighs and buttocks.

Keep them tense then as you breathe out draw your navel back towards your spine.

Next time you breathe in, still tensing the above parts of the body, breathe deeply into your chest and tense your shoulders, arms and hands, as well as your neck and all of your face.

Keep tensing everything in your body.

Hold full as long as is comfortable then as you breathe out: **LET GO AND RELAX!**

Take a normal breath in and out in between then repeat a couple more times.