Strike a Pose

Gentle yoga lifts the health of your body and mind without breaking your back.

December 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

Seeking ways to feel strong and healthy, many HIV-positive people are turning to the healing practice of yoga. They've found that performing yoga poses regularly helps lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels and reduce anxiety and depression. This mind-body exercise can also build muscle and help relieve stress, menopausal symptoms and chronic back pain. "Yoga is a great journey toward health," says Michelle Spencer, an Atlanta-based yoga instructor. Get your Zen on with these four easy moves.

Chair Pose
Stand with feet about shoulder width apart. Bend your knees, keep legs parallel, and lower your hips as if you were going to sit in a chair. Tilt hips and pelvis forward, protecting your lower back, and stretch your arms out above you. Hold for 30 seconds, breathing gently.

Downward Facing Dog (Partial Inversion)
Begin on all fours. Spread your fingers and press them firmly into the floor. Bring knees off floor as you lift tailbone toward ceiling. Gradually straighten legs by shifting thighs back, pressing heels toward the floor. Keep shoulders down and away from ears and keep head between arms. Let your head hang loosely. Stay for one minute, breathing normally. Too hard? Slightly bend your knees.

Seated Spinal Twist
Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front. Cross your left foot over right thigh, keeping left knee pointed toward ceiling. Place your right elbow outside left knee and your left hand on the floor behind you. Gently twist left, moving from your abdomen. Keep your butt on the floor; with each inhale, sit slightly taller; with each exhale, turn a bit farther to the left. After about a minute, gently return to center. Switch sides and repeat.

Warrior II
Stand with feet 3 to 4 feet apart. Turn your right foot out, press left heel down, and bend your right leg so the thigh is nearly parallel to the floor, shin is perpen-dicular to the floor and your knee is directly above your ankle. Extend your arms out to the sides, over your legs. Turn your head gently to the right. Hold the pose, breathing regularly, then switch sides. Can't keep your balance? Keep your hands on your hips and don't bend your knee as much.

YOGA IN YOUR LIVING ROOM

Stretch your yoga practice further with these instructional DVDs:

Beginner: Try Yoga for Beginners (Starz Entertainment, $14.98). And if you’re feeling stressed, try Stress Relief Yoga for Beginners (Gaiam, $15).
Intermediate/Advanced: Try Vinyassa Flow Yoga Session II With Seane Corn (Gaiam, $20).
Children: Make it a family affair with YogaKids 2: ABCs for Ages 3–6 (Gaiam, $15).

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/yoga-health-hiv-15658-9883