

## Prepare your mind and body for practising

### 1. Breathing cycle

- Feel your feet on the floor, sit bones on the chair, hands in your lap
- Breathe in for 4 beats, hold for 7, exhale for 8; repeat the cycle a few times

### 2. Find your sit bones

- Tuck and arch your pelvis, trying to find independence in movement from your spine, rather than moving your whole back backwards and forwards.
- End up in a comfortable position on your sit bones

### 3. Side bends

- Lift one arm up and bend towards the other side, rooting into your sit bones on the side with the extended arm. You can change where you feel the stretch by turning towards the floor or up towards the ceiling. Once you've taken several deep breathes on one side, do the same on the other side.

### 4. Shoulder movement

- Backstroke and freestyle motions with your arms.

### 5. Arm rotations

- Stretch your arms out to the side and pretend there is a door handle on each side of you that you are trying to open. Do this rotation motion for a few breaths.

### 6. Cow face arms

- Bring one hand to the back of your neck and then to your lower back, going back and forth a few times. Then do this with the other hand. You can then combine them or alternate top and bottom, both arms moving in contrary motion. Then, stop and try to clasp your hands together along your back. You can use a strap, tie, or belt to help if your hands can't reach each other. Take several deep breaths here. Repeat on the other side.

### 7. Hugs

- Give yourself some love! Stretch your arms out in front of you, cross them at the elbows, and wrap them around you towards your back, so you can touch your shoulder blades with your hands. Take note of which arm is on top, so you can do it with the other arm on top next. You can use your hands to give yourself a bit of a shoulder and back rub. Take a breath and bend forward towards your knees, rounding your back. Breathe here. Now do all of this again with the other arm on top.

### 8. Eagle arms

- Stretch your arms out in front of you, cross them at the elbows, and bend them upwards so your arms move toward your face. Take note of which arm is on top, so you can do it with the other arm on top next. Move your arms toward each other, so they are moving toward the centre line of your body. Your hands can stay in this back-to-back position, or if you're able, wrap the bottom hand around to grab the top hand, so that the fingers of the bottom hand are now facing the palm of your top hand. Press your hands together and

breathe. You can move your arms up, so your elbows are more at face level to change or intensify the stretch. Keep breathing.

#### 9. Neck stretches and massage

- Gently bend your neck to one side and use your hands to massage your neck and shoulder area. Pretend you're petting your favourite pet and really give yourself some love! You can look towards the floor or up at the ceiling to change which area of the neck is available to you to massage. Avoid massaging the more delicate front part of your neck.

#### 10. Hand stretches and massage

- Place your hands on top of each other, the back of one hand to the palm of the other. Use your thumb of the bottom hand to massage out the palm of the top hand. You can extend the massage to your fingers, which simultaneously massages them and gives them a bit of a stretch.

#### 11. Hips

- Place your feet wide apart and move your knees in towards the centre line of your body so that they touch and then bring them out again. Do this several times to bring some motion to the hip joint.
- Seated figure 4 stretch: lift one foot up and place the outside ankle bone on the other thigh, close to the knee. This creates the figure 4 shape. Flex the foot on top and gently lean your chest toward your foot. You can gently rest your hands on the calf of the leg on top. Keep your back elongated as you lean forward. Breath. Repeat with the other leg on top.