



# INTRODUCTION TO YOGA FOR WOMEN

First Class: Connecting Body, Mind and Breath

## Welcome to Yoga!

When I started practicing yoga I joined a class to help me **keep fit, strong and flexible**. But after just a few classes I noticed other benefits, which I didn't expect. I felt calmer, more connected to myself and at ease in my body. It really helped me to release stress of busy corporate career and parenting small children. This is because, as I discovered over the years, yoga is **more than just physical exercise**; it's a practice that **invites us to connect our body, mind, and breath** (essence of our being) and I'll teach you how.

## Understanding Yoga

Yoga, originated in ancient India, and aims to unite the individual self with the universal consciousness. It achieves this through various techniques, including:

- **Asanas:** Physical postures and movements that promote strength, flexibility, and balance.
- **Pranayama:** Breathing exercises that regulate energy and calm the mind.
- **Meditation:** Practices that cultivate awareness and inner peace.

## Establishing a safe and enjoyable practice

Unless you find a way to feel comfortable in and enjoy your practice, you're less likely to make it a regular habit and benefit from it. We're built differently and have different sensitivities in our bodies, so you'll find that some poses will come easy to you straight away, others will require regular practice to work towards, and some will never feel possible or comfortable. And that is true for everyone. The key is to **listen to your body, respect it's limitations and sensitivities, never force anything or practice when experiencing pain**. I'll share with you different versions of poses and how to use props to support your body. Yoga is not a competition, only exploration and connection with the self.

## Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing)

Diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, is a fundamental yoga technique. It helps to:

- Calm the nervous system
- Increase oxygen intake
- Massage internal organs
- Relax the body to enable safe practice

### How to Practice:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
3. Inhale deeply through your nose making belly rise while keeping your chest relatively still.
4. Exhale slowly through your nose, drawing your belly back towards your spine.
5. Repeat for 5-10 breaths. You can also practice this seated.

## Key Postures Explored

I've recorded a 20 mins video for you summarising the focus on first class and creating a simple practice covering the key postures we explored:

- Easy seat (cross legged)
- Table top (on all fours) with cat and cow movement of the spine
- Downward dog (upside down v)
- Tree (standing on one leg)
- Seated twist

## Next Steps

Congratulations on completing your first yoga class! Next session will be all about finding a balance between effort and ease in your practice. We will practice the poses we learnt and add some more. In the meantime, I recommend making yoga a part of your life by practicing:

- diaphragmatic breathing
- noticing sensations in your body (body scan)
- spotting when your thoughts take you away from where you are and what you're doing
- the recorded short yoga practice with the use of a blanket to support yourself as needed