

# Exercise & happiness



Written by Sophie Thomas

This pandemic, and yet another lockdown has been a really tricky time for most of us. Feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and stress can be really tough, especially when we are separated from our friends and our routines have been shaken up.

Looking after your exercise can make you feel more in control when everything around you seems to be uncertain. The surge of energy and relief after moving your body is like no other, and can help you focus, make friends, and deal with all of the ups and downs that these weird times may bring!

Exercise isn't just boring stuff, like running laps or 100 push ups. Exercise is moving your body, lifting heavy stuff for fun, sprinting and jumping, twisting and turning, and treating yourself like the wild animal we all once were! It's about letting go of stress and tapping into your creative, carefree side! Exercise also isn't about training to 'look good' or body shame - - in fact, it's about improving your confidence and

embracing who you are, no matter where you're from, what you look like or how you present yourself.

Wonderful chemicals, known as endorphins, flood your body each time you get a bit of a sweat on. But exercising will also strengthen your bones and improve your coordination skills, (so you can show off those handstand skills to all of your mates)!

I understand movement can seem off-putting - perhaps even intimidating - but the truth is, exercise is a fundamental right for everyone, so please don't feel scared or embarrassed! The priority here is for you to feel good and thrive, so you can be a good friend, student, and all-round human being - because happier people are kinder people, too!

This year, superhero Joe Wicks brought workouts into our homes!

Try this one at home whenever you're feeling sluggish or bored of your homework and want to get a move on!



You may have seen members of your family getting ready for yoga in their multi-coloured leggings and a rolled-up mat under their arm. You may have never really thought much about it until they reappear from their class with that 'happy look' on their face. The whole evening is wonderful after they have practised yoga. It's like they're the most happy, relaxed and FUN version of themselves!

So what happens in a yoga class?  
What's it all about?

Yoga means "union" or "togetherness". It started way back in India thousands of years ago. That's right it's an OLD thing that's been going on for centuries.

In yoga we learn how to breathe deeper and to bring our mind and body together, in union. You can think of it like this:

Sometimes you may have experienced feeling sad or tired but then once you're in the company of a great friend you completely forget all about it and spend hours talking and laughing! How did this happen?

It happened because your mind was focused on something else!! Namely, being with your friend! In yoga we learn how to do this, even without your best friend around.

Yoga is a practice that teaches us how to focus on the things we really want to focus on. Like joy, happiness, love, kindness, forgiveness, compassion etc. etc.

With this ability to focus on these positive things, you'll learn how to handle or overcome difficult situations in your life without feeling like you just can't do it! Yoga makes you realise how strong and how courageous you really are.

Now back to the beginning: Yoga, what's that all about?

In a yoga class you will learn different physical shapes or poses called "Asanas" (some of them have cool names like dancer's pose, scorpion, crow or dolphin). They help us to create strong, flexible and healthy bodies.

Dream big and more importantly to keep on going even when the going gets tough!



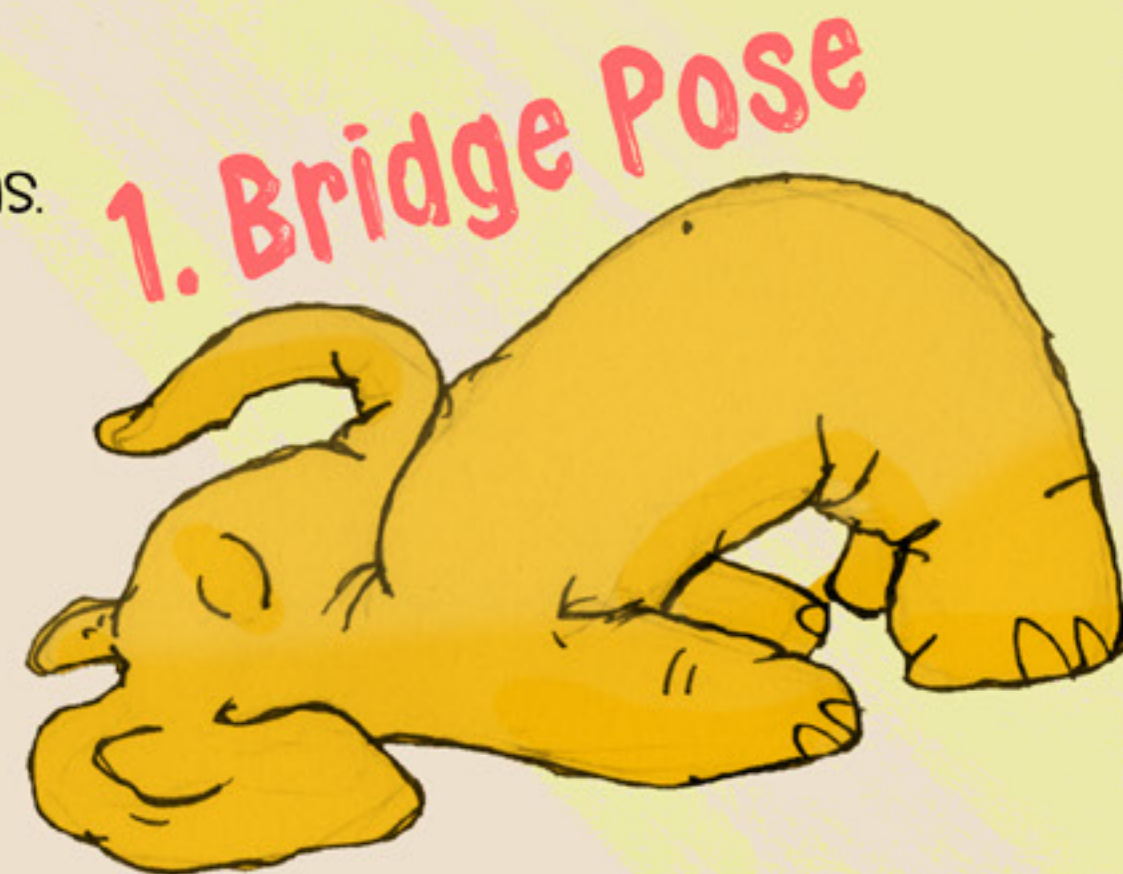


# Yoga moves to try at HOME!!!

(Setu Bandha Sarvangasana)

This rejuvenating backbend gives a great stretch to the spine and thighs.

Benefits: Stretches and opens the shoulders, thighs, hips and chest portion; strengthens the back and hamstrings; increases the flexibility of the spine.



## 1. Bridge Pose

## 2. Tree Pose

(Vrksasana)



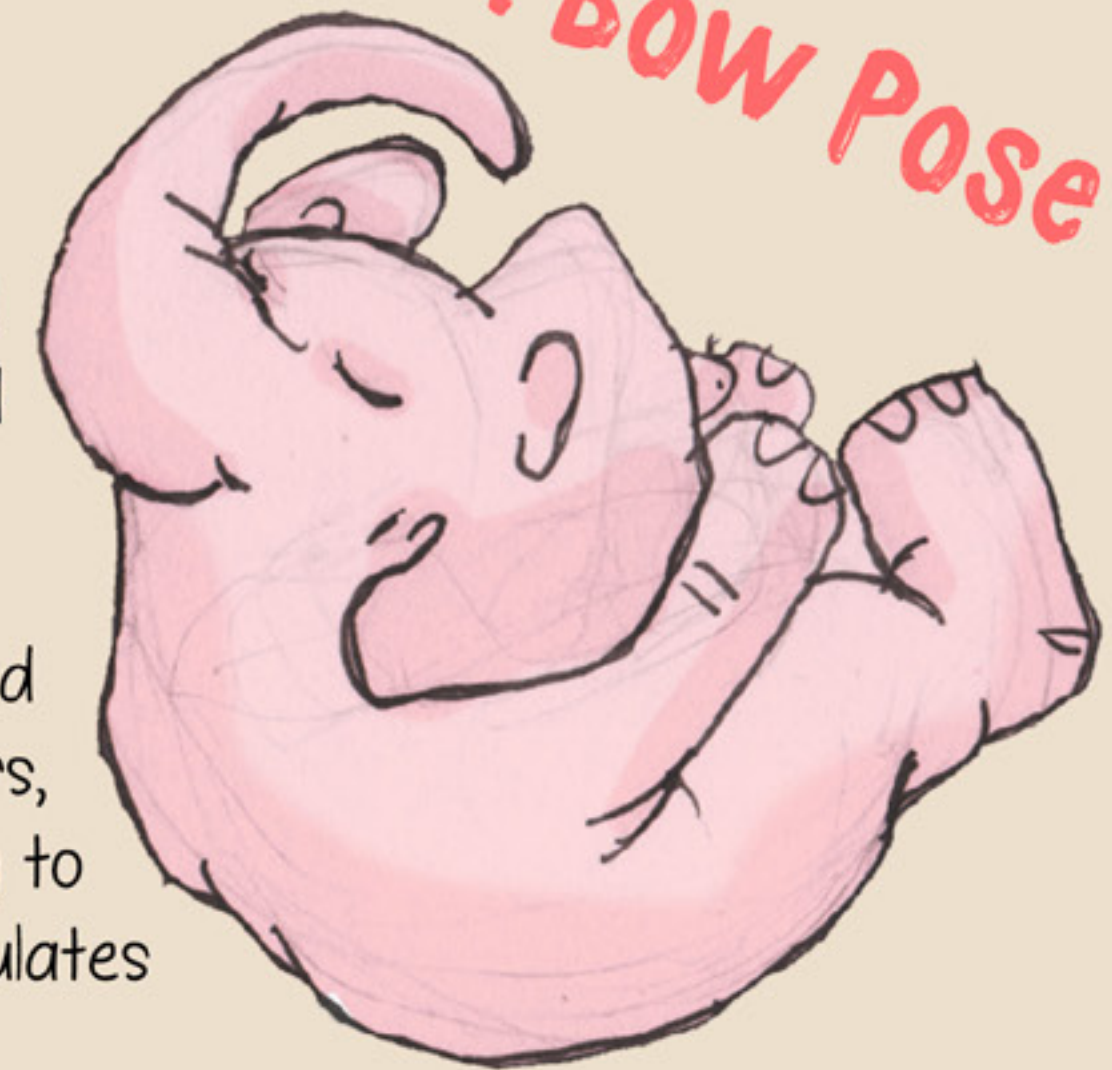
Vrksasana teaches you the grace of a tree, standing tall and maintaining balance.

Benefits: Improves balance and concentration; strengthens the thigh muscles, calves and ankles whilst stretching the legs and the chest

(Dhanurasana)

Bend the back like a bow, and open up the chest and shoulders with the bow pose.

Benefits: Stretches and strengthens the back, shoulders, chest and legs; brings flexibility to hip flexor function; and regulates the digestive system



## 3. Bow Pose