



**PROJECT REBOUND**  
**LOS ANGELES COUNTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**TIPS FOR STRETCHING  
AWAY THE STRESS**

Stretching key muscles after sitting for long periods of time or doing intense work reduces stress and eases muscle tension associated with stress. The following simple stretching is a five to seven minute routine performed while standing, alone or in a group. It is important to stretch until you feel mild tension in your muscles, but stop if you feel any pain and check with a physician first if you have any physical limitation.

**1. MUSCLES**

- A. Reaching High:** Raise your arms over your head, fingertips reaching towards the ceiling, stretching as high as you can. Then bring your arms back down. Rest a moment then repeat two more times.
- B. Extending Arms:** Extend your arms to the side parallel to the floor. Palms up, make circling motions with your hands and arms, first one direction then the other.
- C. Neck Roll:** Relax your neck and roll your head clockwise three times, then roll counter clockwise three times. Never roll your head backwards.
- D. Neck and Upper Back:** Stand straight, arms at sides. Flex hands at right angles to body. Press heel of hand down toward floor, keeping fingers flexed upward. At the same time drop head gently toward right shoulder. Hold for a count of five. Gently roll head forward and around toward the left side. Hold and repeat in other direction, repeat two more times. Never roll your head backwards.
- E. Chest and Shoulder Stretch:** Stand straight, arms behind you, and interlace fingers with palms facing the floor. Slowly lift arms behind you until you feel a gentle stretch in arms, shoulders and chest. Keep chin tucked in. Hold for a count of five, breathing slowly in, then relax. Repeat two more times.
- F. Side Stretch:** Stand with feet shoulder width apart, toes straight ahead. Place one hand on hip, extend other arm over head, making sure to keep your shoulders down. Slowly bend to the side at the waist until you feel a slight tension. Hold and switch sides. Repeat two more times.
- G. Calf Stretch:** Stand about two feet from wall and place hands on wall, feet perpendicular to wall. Lean into wall.

With feet still flat on the floor, put weight on heels and feel a mild tension in the back of the legs. Then, move left foot toward wall and bend left knee, keeping right leg back and straight, foot flat. Don't lock your right knee. Move hips slightly forward to increase stretch. Hold for fifteen seconds. Switch legs.

- H. **Quadriceps Stretch:** Stand about one foot from wall. Lean on wall with left hand for support. Hold top of right foot with right hand and pull right heel gently toward buttocks. Hold for ten seconds. To increase the stretch, tilt hips forward and tighten buttocks. Switch sides.

## 2. EYES

- A. **Blinking:** To keep your eyes moist, prevent itching and aid in relaxation, blink them rapidly for fifteen seconds.
- B. **Refocusing:** To exercise the muscles that focus your lenses, focus first on your fingertips and then focus on an object at least 20 feet away. Repeat 3 times.
- C. **Eye Rolling:** To exercise the muscles that move your eyes, roll your eyeballs around and around clockwise 3 times, then counter-clockwise 3 times. Make wide circles.
- D. **Palming:** To rest your eyes from the light and relax the tiny eye muscles, shape your hands into shallow cups and place them lightly over your open eyes. Hold them there for one minute.

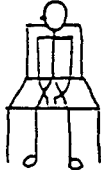
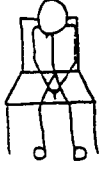
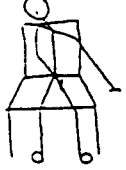
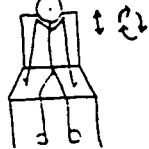

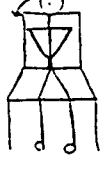
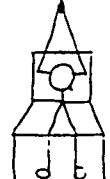
## 3. BREATHING

- A. Let your breathing fall into a nice and easy rhythm, using your nose when you breath in and your mouth when you breath out.
- B. Without forcing, slowly take deep breaths. Breath out in the same slow, easy way. As you breathe out, relax your stomach muscles and let them become softer and softer.
- C. Continue to inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, letting your stomach muscles relax.
- D. Try not to force a feeling of relaxation. Rather, let the sense of relaxation develop gradually but increasingly as you continue breathing and consciously relaxing your belly.
- E. It takes only a few minutes to make deep breathing "work". You will know it after you resume your normal breathing. You will feel more relaxed and often somewhat invigorated.
- F. As with other techniques, deep breathing is improved with practice. Also, its positive effects can be enhanced by doing it for a few additional minutes.

#### 4. CHAIR STRETCHES

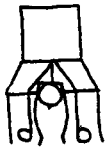
Many jobs in disaster work involve processing essential information or talking on the telephone. Long hours, extended work weeks, and sitting in one position for prolonged amounts of time can also add stress to the body. These practical and effective exercises are designed to be done right at your desk or computer.

For maximum benefit, each of the stretches described below should be repeated 1-3 times, twice daily. Or you may choose to repeat those specific stretches that help your particular hotspots regularly throughout the day or when muscle tension is noted. It is important to stretch until you feel mild tension in your muscles, but stop if you feel any pain and check with a physician first if you have any physical limitation.

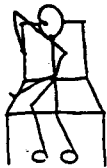
- A.
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- NECK
- Sitting straight in the chair slowly turn your head left and right, pausing at the center. Inhale in one direction while exhaling in the other.
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- From an upright sitting position let your head drop slowly forward. Hold 10-15 seconds allowing the weight of your head to continue to gently stretch your back and neck muscles.
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- Lean your head toward your right shoulder while the opposite arm, palm down, is slowly extended from your side. Gently stretch and hold for 10-15 seconds, then repeat on the other side.
- B.
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- UPPER BACK
- Slowly raise and drop your shoulders 5-10 times giving a gentle squeeze as your shoulders reach up to your neck. Rotate your shoulders forwards and then backwards 5-10 times.
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- Cross your right arm in front of the torso and gently pull it at the elbow towards your chest with your left arm. Hold gently for 5-10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.
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- Clasp your arms in front of the body and lower your head between your arms, holding gently for 10-15 seconds.
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- Lean forward, clasping your arms behind your back, holding gently for 10-15 seconds. Raising the arms increases the stretch.

C.

### MID-BACK



Lie forward resting your chest on your legs and let your arms hang loose and touch your toes. Hold for 10-15 seconds.



Twist to the right, holding onto the seat of your chair with the left hand. Your right hand holds the back of the chair and increases the tension by pulling forward gently. Repeat to the left. Hold 10-15 seconds.



Cross the right leg over the left and while holding the crossed leg gently lean forward. Hold 10-15 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



### LEGS

Extend legs out in front of you and alternately point and retract the feet. Then rotate your feet at the ankle first in one direction, then in the other direction.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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