

Yoga Physical Therapist: You need this so *MUCH!*

Mindfulness, Understanding, Compassion, Healing

Stephanie Carter Kelley, PT, PhD

www.stephaniecarterkelley.com

info@stephaniecarterkelley.com

Releasing the Tension: Neck and Shoulders

Props: strap, blanket, chair, bolsters

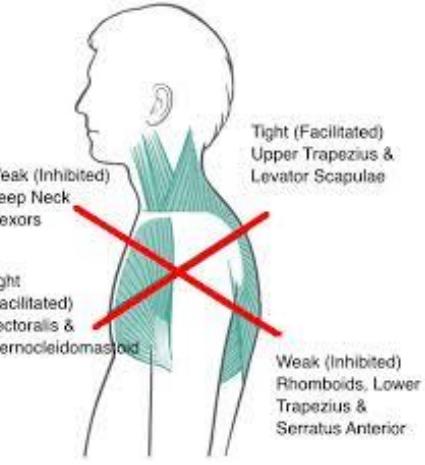
Mindfulness:

Breath awareness of chest, upper side ribs, and ribs 1 & 2. Tune into sensations and movement of this area. Remember these sensations. How do you feel right now? What time of the day do you notice the most tension in your neck and shoulders? If you don't know, your goal is to become very aware of the sensations in this area and follow them throughout the day. Keep a journal if you need to. What else is occurring as you feel an increase in tension? Have you been sitting with a poor posture? Have you just had a stressful conversation? Are you reminded of a stressful event or time in your life? Pay just as much attention to the emotional and social reasons for the tension as you do the physical reasons for your tension.

Now let's see if we can manipulate this area with the breath. As you inhale, the chest/sternum lifts out in front of you; upper side ribs widen the chest; ribs 1 and 2 lift up toward neck without lifting the collar bones and shoulders. If you can't feel movement, then you can use props for feedback. Place a strap around your upper ribs, just below your chest and snug it comfortably tight. To feel the upper ribs, lie on a blanket and bring an edge up and over the right side of your chest with the folded edge up next to your neck. Hold the blanket down with your left hand.

Understanding:

Assessment of Posture and Range of Motion: Can you get into correct posture? Is your neck really tight?

Posture and Alignment	Neck ROM
 <p>Problem: Forward Head/Kyphotic Posture</p> <p>Tight (Facilitated) Muscles: Weak (Inhibited) Deep Neck Flexors Tight (Facilitated) Pectoralis & Sternocleidomastoid</p> <p>Weak (Inhibited) Muscles: Tight (Facilitated) Upper Trapezius & Levator Scapulae</p> <p>Weak (Inhibited) Muscles: Rhombooids, Lower Trapezius & Serratus Anterior</p>	 <p>Solution: Lengthen back of neck, lift chest, belly button to spine</p> <p>Neck Retraction with Thoracic Extension In sitting with balanced posture, keep chin level and draw head up and back. Overcorrect slightly to stretch just under the base of the skull, then relax. Repeat several times.</p>  <p>Flexion: Chin to Sternum Extension: Face almost parallel to ceiling</p> <p>Rotation Left and Right: Chin in line with collarbone</p>

Creating Mobility: Focus on Upper Back and Ribs; Elongate the Back of the Neck; and Open the Chest

			
<p>Cat/Cow – Sitting Sit on front of chair. Inhale, roll to front of pelvic, arch back, and look up if comfortable. Exhale, look down, round back and roll to back of pelvic. Move through comfortable range of motion.</p>	<p>Twist, Reach and Bend Reach Behind and Hold Elbows; Look down to Right armpit for 5 deep breaths. Look down to left armpit for 5 deep breaths.</p>	<p>Cat/Cow on Hands and Knees Focus on upper rib cage, shoulder blades pressing around body with rounding, and sensation at the base of the neck</p>	<p>Camel Pose Before reaching back to chair, drop tailbone and push hips forward. Reach back for the chair and open chest. Use support on the chair to support upper back and head.</p>

Creating Stability

		
<p>"Y" Position with Arms/Forehead on Floor "T" Position with Arms/Lift Forehead off of floor</p>	<p>Mountain Pose with arm variations (strong standing pose): Using strap to support posture</p>	<p>Warrior 2 Anchor the Shoulder Blades Down</p>
		
<p>Staff Pose Sit with legs straight out in front. Place hands at hips with fingers toward toes. Push through elbows and down through shoulder blades to unweight hips. Elongate tops of shoulders.</p>	<p>Bridge Bend knees to touch fingertips; Arms at sides with palms down and push into floor. Lift hips and squeeze gluts. Don't move feet, but push into heels to activate thighs.</p>	<p>Savasana – Relaxation Pose You should be completely comfortable lying on your back. Suggested props: blanket roll, pillows or chair under your knees if you are more comfortable in flexion.</p>

Understanding: Follow the tension. The neck is between your heart and mind. When the heart and mind are not in alignment, the flow of energy can get disrupted around the neck. Pay very close attention. While you may try to get through your day ignoring the tension and pain, this will not help. You may not know yet what triggers your neck and shoulder tension, but be open to all of the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual reasons. As you gain an understanding of the "why" you may begin to feel more compassion for yourself and your neck and shoulders.

Healing: Take time each day to breath and pay attention. Allow yourself to turn inward, nurture yourself, and healing will take place.

Namaste,