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Morning Stretch

Benefits of stretching

- increases flexibility
- improves range of motion
- improves circulation
- promotes better posture
- helps relieve stress
- may help prevent injury

Please consult a GP if you are in any doubt about doing these exercises.

1. First, stand in bare feet or socks with feet about hip-width apart, with knees unlocked so that the legs can bend slightly and with the feet parallel.
 2. Next, become aware, as best you can, of physical sensations and feelings throughout the body as you engage in a series of gentle stretches. As best you can letting go of any tendency to push beyond your limits.
 3. Then, on an in-breath, slowly raise your arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor, and then, after reaching out, continue on the next in-breath raising them, slowly and mindfully, until the hands meet above your head, all the while feeling the tension in the muscles as they work to lift the arms and then maintain the stretch.
 4. Then, letting the breath move in and out freely at its own pace, continue to stretch upward, the fingertips gently pushing toward the sky, the feet firmly grounded on the floor as you feel the stretch in the muscles and joints of the body all the way from the feet and legs up through the back, shoulders, into the arms, hands and fingers.
 5. Maintain the stretch for a short time, breathing freely in and out, noticing any changes in the sensations and feelings in the body as you continue to hold the stretch.
 6. At a certain point, when you are ready, slowly, very slowly, on an out-breath, allow the arms to come back down. Lower them with the wrists bent so that the fingers point upward and the palms are pushing outward. Gradually let the arms come back to rest alongside the body, hanging from the shoulders.
 7. Allow the eyes to close gently and focus your attention on the movements of the breath and feelings throughout the body. Be curious.
 8. Continue by carefully stretching each arm and hand up, in turn, as if picking fruit from a tree when it is just out of reach, with full awareness of the sensations throughout the body. Then, lift the opposite heel off the floor while stretching up.
 9. After this sequence, slowly raise both arms up high, keeping them parallel to each other, and then allow the body to bend to the left, with hips going over the right, form a big crescent that extends sideways from the feet right through the torso, the arms, the hands and fingers. Then come back to standing on an in-breath, and then on an out-breath slowly bending over forming a curve on the opposite direction.
 10. Return to standing with arms alongside and roll your shoulders while letting the arms dangle passively. First raise the shoulders upward toward the ears as far as they will go, then backward as if you were attempting to draw the shoulder blades together, then letting them drop down completely, then squeezing the shoulders together in front of the body as far as they will go with arms passive and dangling. Continue rolling through these positions as smoothly and mindfully as you can.
- Finally, remain still for a few moments in a standing or sitting posture.