

Yoga Week 24: Yoga for Feeling Frozen

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What does it mean to be in a freeze mode?

Think about an animal in the jungle hiding under a tree to protect themselves as they see their predator walking by.

Their prey are nervous and scared. They hold their breath, don't move a muscle, keep everything constricted and wait until their predator has moved past them.

Freeze mode involves an unconscious decision that our minds are not in control over.

It can feel like we are not part of our bodies and we become unable to move and take control over our body due to fear and our neurological system becoming triggered.

Even though we may not be freezing out of fear of being "attacked by our predator" like an animal in the jungle, we may walk around every day in freeze mode when stress builds up.

Being in freeze mode is part of the fight or flight response that is activated but may be difficult to get out of once we are in it.

When we continually face stress, judgement, abuse, triggers—we may jump right into freeze mode rather than fight or flight mode and stay in freeze mode longer than our bodies are made to be.

A chronically active sympathetic nervous system (fight, flight, & freeze) keeps the body under constant pressure. Sooner or later, our inner tiger will tear us up and we become like a deer in the headlights, which can feel like a helpless feeling.

Symptoms of Staying in Freeze Mode:

- Tight & stiff shoulders and back
- Upset stomach
- Recurring headaches
- An urge to hurt yourself
- An increasing tendency to lose our temper or become easily upset

Breathing and meditation allows us to see our negative self-talk in our minds and to observe it objectively, without being in the middle of it.

It's like watching a rainstorm through a window from a warm & cozy cabin. The peace we feel when we are watching our minds rather than identifying with our thoughts is the peace that is naturally within us.

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YOGA FOR BREAKING OUT OF FREEZE MODE

- Being aware of your body & bringing movement that involves getting the senses activated.
- Squeeze your hand tight into a fist on a five second inhale, open hands up, spreading finger wide apart on a 5 second exhale. Repeat multiple times.
- Place hands behind head & bring elbows out to the side, exhale forward drawing the chin towards the chest and inhale, opening your chest & picking the head up. Repeat multiple times.
- Hold the bottom of your head with your hands. You can apply pressure to your head using your thumbs and walking your thumbs inward until you get to the base of your skull. Lift your head up higher, lengthening your neck with the assistance of your hands. Repeat multiple times.

Open the Gate (Hip Release)

- Start on one leg, bring the other leg forward and up 90 degrees, open lifted leg out to the side and then "closing the gate" with the same leg, bringing it back to meet the other leg. Remember not to twist entire body, just the hip joint. Repeat on other side & repeat multiple times.
- Heel & toe tapping. Standing up and taking a step forward with your foot, placing only the heel on the ground in front of you. Repeat multiple times.
- Starting in a standing position, begin to ground yourself. Ask yourself, (what's my name, where I am, what am I standing on, what is the texture of the ground, what can I hear around me?).
 - Begin to lower your body until you come to the ground on your hands and knees. Stop here and notice any changes (what do I feel under my hands? did any sound change? did any feeling in my body change while lowering to the ground?).
 - Hear your hands meet the ground, then lower until you are completely lying down (notice, are you on a rug? a yoga mat? tile? wood floor? outside?).
 - Become aware of how your body & surroundings feel. Repeat this several times and monitor yourself as you stand back up then back to the ground again. (Maybe even put music on to this and turn it into a dance!)
 - Repeat multiple times.
- As you bring your body to a position where you are lying down and standing up.... think, how far away am I from the ground outside?
 - How can I become more grounded?
 - Perhaps you take your socks off, go outside, tend to plants, listen to a stream, listen to the birds, feel the sunshine on your skin, walk in the dirt, and so much more.

The earth has music for those who listen

-Shakespeare

