

## **BODY PRAYER BREATHING, STRETCHING, & MOVEMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

### **I. Breathing:**

**DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATH** – push out on abdomen when inhaling; chest does not move.

**FULL (YOGA) BREATH** – use diaphragmatic breath for first part of inhalation, then pull rest of breath up through the chest. This is only one breath—half of it is breathed while moving your abdomen and the second half is breathed expanding chest.

**MEDITATION or RHYTHM BREATH** – empty lungs; breathe in to a slow count of six; hold for slow count of three; breathe out to slow count of six; hold lungs empty for count of three. Repeat until mind becomes calm.

**II. Stretches:** (Remember to keep breathing throughout stretches and movements. Holding our breath creates tension in our bodies.)

**RAGDOLL** – start with arms relaxed at sides, hips tucked. Breathe in a slow, deep pattern throughout this stretch. Begin by dropping your head forward, tucking your chin, and rounding your shoulders. Then, lower yourself forward one vertebrae at a time, allowing your arms to hang limp. Your knees stay bent all throughout this exercise. Lower forward until fingertips are about six to twelve inches above floor—or to your comfort level. (If you have high blood pressure, do not lower head below waist.) To ascend, start from your low back and begin to straighten up slowly, one vertebrae at a time. End by straightening your shoulders, lifting your head, and tucking your hips. Take a few deep breaths and relax. Repeat as often as you like!

**WINDMILL** – Be sure your knees are relaxed. Start with arms relaxed at sides, hips tucked under and exhale. Inhale lifting both arms overhead, palms facing each other (holding a beach ball). Exhale, lower arms to the right, stretching the arms out as you descend; fingertips come close as possible to floor when you reach bottom. Inhale as you continue stretching and lifting your arms up to the left until arms are overhead. Exhale, relax and observe the stretch in your body. Repeat now moving to the left first. This completes one round; repeat as often as you like.

**SHOULDER STRETCHES** – start with arms relaxed at sides and then slowly tilt head over towards right shoulder. Hold that stretch for a moment while you breathe and relax the left side of your neck. Inhale and raise your left shoulder up, closer to the left ear. Exhale and lower the left shoulder and then pull on the left shoulder with the left arm. Repeat two more times. Repeat on opposite side.

### **III. Movements:**

**CENTERING PRAYER** – standing, begin with hands at sides, palms out, and exhale completely. Inhale as you lift arms up overhead. Exhale and lead with right hand down, followed by left (hands in straight line)—drawing a line through the center of your body. Repeat leading with left hand first, followed by right, as you center.