

Yoga poses to release  
*Emotions Like Anger and Sadness*

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## Grief lingers in the lungs

When we cry really hard, we may release gasping sobs, or when we talk about emotions during a depression, we may say something like “I feel like I can’t breathe.”

The lungs are also associated with taking in the new and releasing the old. If we’re grieving, we have a hard time with both. Letting go and moving on.

The idea of lungs holding onto grief is commonly found in Chinese medicine, but from a yoga perspective, the lungs are associated with the heart chakra, the fourth chakra, related to love. When we grieve, our hearts hurt. We lost something we loved. When our hearts are open, we’re able to ride the flow of life.

### *Yoga poses to release grief and sadness:*

☉ Practice backbends. Try a passive backbend by rolling up a blanket, towel or yoga mat and placing it underneath the shoulder blades, at bra strap level. Lay here for any amount of time you wish, preferably five or 10 minutes.



☉ Open up the hips. The hips relate to the second chakra, the seat of emotions, and often function as a junk drawer containing all our repressed emotions. Try goddess pose, pictured at right, and experiment with moving your hips around.

☉ Meditate while visualizing a ball of light at the heart chakra. Imagine it burning away all the residue and clearing blockages with its incredible light.



## Anger gunks up the liver

Anger's connection to the liver is also found in both Chinese medicine and yoga. The liver cleans the blood and stores energy. And when someone is really angry, we say her blood is boiling.

In yoga, the liver is related to the third chakra, in the belly. This is the seat of will and power. Often when we're angry, it's because we feel we've been wronged, and feel powerless against that wrong.

### *Yoga poses to cleanse the liver and release anger:*

☾ Practice twists to wring out the internal organs, like the seated twist at right. Keep the spine nice and long as you twist.



☾ Poses that fire up the third chakra and encourage balance include leg lifts. Lie on your back and place the hands underneath your hips for support. Slowly lift and lower the legs, pressing the lower back into the ground. If this is too much, try one leg at a time.



## Holding on tightens the hamstrings

The hamstrings are connected to our ability to let go and trust, which makes sense because they're linked to forward folds — postures of surrender. They're also connected to fear — we often grip the hamstrings when

entering fight or flight mode, which makes sense if the body is preparing to run off to safety.

If we tend to want to control life, we may have tight hamstrings. Some people also say the hamstrings are related to holding ourselves back in some way, holding back our power, creativity, or fullness of self-expression out of fear.

Freeing the hamstrings requires focusing on that difficult balance between letting go of control while putting ourselves out into the world with full trust that life will take us where we need to go.

### *Yoga poses to release the hamstrings and encourage feelings of letting go:*

☾ Practice forward folds, poses of surrendering. You may also want to combine these folds with practices that strengthen the third chakra, the power center, which is the fire of will and self-determination.

Keep the spine long in any forward folds.



### Worry clogs the spleen

The spleen is related to the liver. It helps to filter blood and supports the body's immune system. Energetically, it also holds worry. Fortunately, worry dissipates much more quickly than the other, stickier emotions like anger and grief.

## *Yoga poses to reduce worry:*

☾ Strengthen the first chakra, which affirms your connection to the universe, the ultimate source of power and nourishment.

Reduce anxiety by grounding down and trusting in life itself.

To do this, try walking barefoot or practicing malasana, or yogi squat pose, pictured at right. If this isn't comfortable for you, try it against a wall or placing your heels on a rolled up blanket. Only lower down as far as feels good.

You can also rest in child's pose and feel nurtured in this safe resting place. Pictured at right.



## Hips are an emotional junk drawer

The hips hold a variety of emotions, from stress to sadness to trauma. They're the epicenter of the second chakra, which is the energy center related to emotions. In the U.S. many people have chronically tight hips, partially because we sit a lot and partially because our culture is scared of emotion.

## *Yoga poses to open the hips and release repressed emotions:*

Practice hip openers like goddess pose and malasana, pictured above. Try supta baddha konasana, reclined butterfly. Lie down bringing the feet to

touch and allow your knees to fall outward. Move the hips in circles. Dance. Shake. Also, interrupt sitting with frequent breaks.

The hips can take a long time to open, so hold whatever poses you try for one minute at least, but up to five or even 10 minutes.

## Shoulders hold stress

This is probably a no-brainer, but I feel like the shoulders are under-appreciated while everyone focuses on heart-openers and hips. If you're ever feeling stressed or worried, I recommend spending five or 10 minutes opening up the shoulders. It really helps release a lot of tension.

### *Yoga poses to open the shoulders and reduce stress:*

Down dogs are great, pictured at right.

Also try down puppy: From all fours, press the hands a few inches out in front of you until you can lower the chest down toward the ground as you would in down dog.



You can also bend your elbows and place the triceps on a table. Let gravity loosen the shoulders, taking care not to press, just allowing the gradual opening.

Spend as much time as you'd like opening up this area and enjoy the sense of joy and freedom that emanates as a result!

♥ *I hope this served you! Namaste.* ♥