



Santhika  
Retreat  
Center

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## 7 Yoga Poses to Connect You to the Air Element

*"Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survives by bending with the wind."*  
- Bruce Lee

The air element is associated with the fourth chakra, Anahata or heart chakra, and is located over your sternum. This element and chakra are associated with love, freedom, openness, mobility, frivolity, positivity, and intellect. When the air element is balanced, you are able to freely give and receive love, feel light and open, be compassionate, feel motivated and innovative, and express mental agility. An unbalanced air element – either too much or too little – may lead you to feel withdrawn, noncommittal, unproductive, unfocused, sluggish, or overloaded with racing thoughts.

### 1. Easy Pose (Sukhasana)

Before you start your yoga practice, you'll want to bring awareness to your breath and connect to the air element. This is a seated pose, but don't let the name confuse you – easy pose can be quite challenging, especially with a monkey mind. Practice this pose while bringing all of your attention to your breath – in and out through the nose.

- Start in a seated position with your legs extended in front of you.
- Bend your knees and cross your legs in front of you at the shins.
- Place each foot under the opposite knee, and place your hands on your knees, palms down.
- Balance your weight evenly. Align your head, neck, and spine.
- Hold for 5 to 10 slow, steady breaths.
- Release and change the cross of your legs.





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### 2. Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana)

Start your yoga practice by opening up your chest with this pose. The air element is embodied in the breath and opening up your chest allows you to expand your lung capacity.

- Begin by lying prone on the floor with your big toes touching.
- Place your palms on the floor with your elbows bent and fingertips slightly behind your shoulders.
- As you press your elbows toward your torso, lift your head and upper chest.
- Hold for 5 to 10 breaths.



### 3. Cow/Cat Pose (Bitilasana/Marjaryasana)

Combining Cow Pose with Cat Pose creates a continuous and deliberate flow of air movement as you expand and contract your chest. Focusing on your breath as you move through these two poses is a great way to connect to the air element.

- Come to your hands and knees, with your body in a tabletop position.
- Bring your wrists underneath your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
- Spread your fingers and press your palms into the ground.
- Draw your shoulder blades onto your back and curl your toes under.
- On an inhale, move into Cow Pose by arching your back and allowing your belly to sink to the floor.
- Lift your head and look straight in front of you.
- On an exhale, move into Cat Pose by rounding your spine and tucking your chin to your chest.
- Repeat Cow/Cat Pose for 5 to 10 cycles of breath.



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### 4. Bow Pose (Dhanurasana)

Bow Pose looks like an archer's bow: your torso and legs representing the body of the bow, and your arms the string. This pose is another good one to open up your chest and better connect to the air element.

- Lie flat on your belly with your arms alongside of you.
- Bend both knees so the soles of your feet are facing the ceiling.
- Wrap your hands around your ankles or feet.
- Lift your head, upper chest, and thighs off the floor.
- Helpful modification: Use a yoga strap to catch the feet if your arms can't quite reach around to hold them.
- Hold for 5 to 10 breaths.



### 5. Bridge Pose (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana)

This gentle backbend will open up your chest, helping to keep your spine flexible.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor—hip-width apart and directly under your knees.
- Keep your arms straight along the sides of your body, and shuffle your shoulder blades slightly underneath the body.
- Press the palms of your hands into the floor and engage your quadriceps and stomach muscles.
- Slowly lift your hips and spine, and continue to draw your shoulders under your body, possibly even interlacing your hands below your hips.
- Helpful Modification: Bring a block or bolster under the base of your spine to support your body weight.





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Hold for 5 to 10 breaths, and then slowly release, starting to lower from the shoulders until your back and hips are flat on the floor.

### 6. Camel Pose (Ustrasana)

Camel Pose is a more advanced chest-opening pose, so make sure to be aware of your body and its limits, especially if you have lower back or neck issues.

- Kneel on the floor with your knees hip-width apart and your thighs perpendicular to the floor. Tuck your toes under.
- Bring your hands to your low back, your fingers pointing down.
- Inhale and draw your hips forward, while walking your gaze up and back. You should feel an opening of the chest.
- To deepen the pose, continue to lean back and reach for one heel at a time. Hold onto each of your heels, with your fingertips pointing toward your toes and thumbs on the outside of each foot.
- Keep your thighs perpendicular to the floor, with your hips directly over your knees.
- Hold for 5 to 10 breaths.





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### 7. Lord of the Dance Pose (Natarajasana)

When you're ready to add a little challenge to a chest-opener, this pose will also give you the opportunity to practice balancing.

- Begin by focusing your eye gaze on one point that is not moving.
- Bring your weight to balance on the right leg.
- Slowly reach your left hand for the inside of your left ankle as you start to draw your chest forward and your right leg back.
- Extend your right arm overhead as you continue to draw your heart forward and up.
- Hold for 5 to 10 breaths.
- Slowly release and repeat on the other side.

