

BACK STORY

THE YOGI LAWYER: INCORPORATING ASANAS INTO YOUR DAY WHILE CHAINED TO YOUR DESK

BY LAURA M. TUCKER, ESQ.

Being an attorney is stressful. When an important deadline is coming up or clients are streaming into the office, we don't always have time to take the proper breaks necessary for rejuvenation. Luckily, even when you have just a few minutes, you can perform a few simple yoga postures (called asanas) at your desk, in order to combat chronic sitting problems and invite mindfulness back into your day.

Practicing yoga regularly has been shown to alleviate chronic pain, such as pain related to sitting at a desk all day, neck and shoulder soreness and/or headaches. Additionally, yoga assists in managing stress and cortisol levels and contributes to a healthier outlook on life. Yoga also offers lawyers a few moments to reset, slow the heart rate, and invite stillness into an otherwise harrowing day.

Even the least flexible attorney can incorporate a few simple movements at the desk throughout the day. Start all of the following poses with your feet flat on the ground (women may need to slip off high heels to do so).

Neck Rolls

Many of you probably do this move every day – and you didn't even realize you were already yogis. Straighten your back tall, and place your hands on your knees. Slowly roll your neck several times clockwise, taking special care to move through the cracks and sticky points. When you feel your neck loosen, roll your neck in the opposite direction, mindful of the sticky points.

For an extra stretch, extend your right arm out diagonal from your shoulder and gently pull your neck toward the left side with your fingers on the top of your head, holding for a few moments. Repeat on the other side.

Eagle Arms

This position is great for alleviating pain in your wrists from typing. Straighten your back tall, and extend your arms out to the sides. Exhale, crossing one arm under the other and grabbing the opposite shoulder with both hands. This may be as much movement as you accomplish, and you can rest here for a few breaths.

If you are more flexible, bring your forearms in front of your face, and make your palms touch, twisting like ropes. Relax your shoulder blades back, and lift your fingers higher until your biceps are straight out from your shoulders. You

should feel the stretch through your upper back and shoulders. Rest here for a few breaths before untwisting out and swinging your arms to complete eagle arms on the other side.

Cat-Cow

These moves are ideal for releasing tension in your shoulders, spine and low back. Place your hands on your knee caps. While straightening your arms and while you inhale deeply, press your chest forward, opening up broadly through your shoulders and lifting your head to gaze up at the ceiling: this is cow pose.

On your exhale, round your spine forward all the way through the back of your neck like a feline arching its back, drawing your chin into your chest: this is cat. Flow through these two movements several times, following the speed of your breath.

Seated Pigeon

Pigeon pose is a great way to relieve tension in your hips, sciatic nerve, and loosen your piriformis, a small muscle located behind your glutes. All of these areas of the body are particularly impacted by long periods of sitting—the position attorneys most often find themselves in throughout the day.

With your spine straight, bring your left leg up until it is lifted above your right thigh. Drop your knee open by rotating it outward to the left, bringing your left ankle to rest on your right thigh, just above your knee. Keep your left foot flexed through the entire movement to protect your knees. Depending on your flexibility, this might be where you rest in the pose, breathing deeply.

If flexibility allows, gently push on the side of your left knee, inviting openness into your left hip, left lower back and glute. Again, this might be where you rest in the pose, breathing deeply. If you can do so safely, straighten your spine, pull in your belly using your abs, and gently fold forward at your hip crease, as far as your flexibility safely allows; only go as far forward as is comfortable. Rest for a few breaths, then slowly pull yourself up. Repeat on the right side.

While getting in a full 30- or 60-minute yoga session a few times per week is ideal, it's not always possible to fit in between court appearances, client meetings and writing motions. These simple moves can provide a much-needed rest for even the busiest litigator.

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