Energizing breaths (arouse body/mind; engage “fight-or-flight” response):

Energizing breaths engage the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which prepares the body and mind for action. The SNS increases heart rate, raises blood pressure, shunts blood away from digestive and visceral organs, impeding efficient processing of nutrients and waste. It shunts blood to peripheral muscles in the arms and legs, preparing them for vigorous movement. Glucose is released from the liver, to offer immediate energy. The sphincter contracts to impede elimination. In non-pregnant women, uterine contractions are inhibited. In pregnant women, uterine contractions are promoted. The eyes dilate, for distant vision. An engaged SNS sends the “fight-or-flight” signal to the brain, telling it to prepare for action against threat or challenge. The “fight-or-flight” response is triggered within the amygdala, part of the limbic system, or emotional brain. The amygdala sends the “fight of flight” signal to the body by releasing stress hormones such as cortisol.

One important point: Energizing breaths should be accompanied in your practice by calming breaths, to provide balance. Energizing breaths introduce more oxygen into the bloodstream, which in turn can make you feel light-headed. Introduce them gradually into your practice and remember not to push yourself, especially in a yoga class – breath at your own pace. Overuse of energizing breaths can lead to agitation. Energizing breaths can also trigger a manic episode in those with bipolar disorder, so if you have concerns, please consult a therapist before practicing them. Energizing breaths should always be learned from a certified yoga instructor, and not from a book. The following written instructions should only be used to refresh your memory.

Energizing Breath (used to regulate fatigue or depression):

Breath of joy: Stand in mountain pose (tadasana) with feet a hip width apart, stacking bone on bone upward, knees soft, tailbone tucked, shoulders relaxed back and down, chin at neutral, rising through the crown of the head. Stretch the arms out in front of you, take a small inhalation through the nose. Stretch the arms out to the side of the body in “T” position and take a second small inhalation nasally. Stretch the arms up overhead, and take a third small inhalation through the nose. Then exhale forcefully through the nose or mouth, as you hinge forward at the hips, bend at the knees, and swing the arms forcefully down in an arc from the overhead position, out in front, and then out behind you. Inhale back up to standing with arms stretched forward in front of the body. Repeat. This breath should not be done by anyone with uncontrolled high blood pressure, recent surgery, neck, shoulder or spinal injuries, hernia, or heart problems, or during pregnancy.
Calming breaths (to reduce stress, anxiety and anger, to aid with sleep):

Calming breaths engage the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which relaxes body and mind. The PNS slows the heart rate, reduces blood pressure, shunts blood away from skin and peripheral muscles in the arms and legs and into the digestion system and other visceral organs, allowing efficient processing of nutrients, waste and toxins. The eyes also constrict, for close vision. An engaged PNS sends an “all clear” signal to the brain, telling it that: “all is well,” stilling the “fight-or-flight” response triggered within the amygdala, part of the limbic system or emotional brain. The brain’s amygdala sends an “all clear” signal to the body by curbing the release of stress hormones such as cortisol.

• **Three-part yogic breath (dirgha breath):** This is the basic breath of yoga, and the way we breathe as children. Begin by breathing through the nose, and allow the breath to naturally lengthen and deepen. On an inhalation, let the diaphragm descend fully so the lungs fill completely and your belly expands like a big balloon. Then exhale completely, allowing the navel to move toward the back body. Repeat, inhaling and expanding from belly, to chest, to shoulders. Exhale and contract from shoulders, to chest, to belly. Let the dirgha breath be easy and deep, without strain, without unnatural lengthening. Do not do this breath if the sinuses or throat are congested or you have a respiratory infection.

• **Ocean sounding breath (ujayai breath):** This breath through the nose is layered atop the dirgha breath by slightly constricting the throat so you can hear the sound of the breath inside your head. Focus on the calming breath moving in and out of the body like the tide of the ocean. This calming breath has the added benefit of focusing the mind.

• **Ratio breathing (1-2 breath):** Ratio breathing, where the exhalation is twice as long as the inhalation, is one of the best ways to engage the parasympathetic nervous system, calming the body and reducing anxiety. It can help you sleep, combat an anxiety attack, or soothe anger. To begin, inhale through the nose, counting silently, “one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two.” Then exhale nasally, counting, “one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three, one-thousand-four.” Repeat until you feel the body and mind begin to relax. To become more familiar with ratio breathing, try a variety of 1-2 ratios to see which works most naturally for you: Inhale for 3 seconds, exhale 6 seconds; or inhale for 4 seconds and exhale for 8 seconds. For greater relaxation, ratio breathing can be combined with the dirgha breath and/or ujjayi breath.

• **Alternate Nostril Breathing:** to calm mind, create introspection and focus, soothe nervous system, brings balance to both hemispheres of the brain, a practice to use at any time to bring a sense of calm, clear, harmonious energy to the body.

( can be done with or without hands) Inhale up through the left side of the body, then exhale out the right. Inhale through the right, then exhale down the left (repeat this circular cycle of breathing from 2-15 minutes). Imagine breath traveling up through left heel all the way to space between the eyebrows, exhale from the space between the eyebrows all the way down the right side of the body. If using the hands, fold the index and middle finger to the base of the palm. seal off the right nostril with the thumb as you inhale through the left. Seal the left nostril with the ring finger as you exhale out the left nostril. Repeat this cycle of inhaling, switching and exhaling for a few minutes. Let the last exhale of this breath be through the left side, then pause and observe the effects of on the body and mind.

**Poses to Ground, Soothe, and Restore**
**Childs Pose: Garbasana**

Helps establish a feeling of safety because the head is lower than the heart, body releases hormones that tell the body “all is well,” increases flexibility in the hips and legs; oxygenates and decongests abdominal organs improving digestion.

1. Begin in a tabletop position with your palms spread wide, hands and arms directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Establish the dirgha breath.
2. Exhale and press your hips back towards your heels, extending your torso over your thighs, hinging at the hips.
3. Bring your forehead to the floor or to a block, blanket or other support.
4. You can extend your arms alongside your head, palms resting on the floor or keep the arms resting gently at your sides.
5. Breathe deeply for 10 breaths or more (you can also smile your secret smile, recalling something that recently brought you joy if that feels right).
6. To release, exhale and engage the core muscles to stabilize the lower back. Inhaling, roll up the spine to a seated position.

**Mountain Pose: Tadasana**

Helps to establish a sense of grounding and stability because the body is standing and facing forward. Engages the root chakra (energy center), which helps facilitate a feeling of safety and empowerment. Compresses the joints, which tends to cause a feeling of strength and confidence.

1. Stand with feet parallel, hip-width apart, arms at sides. Fan the toes wide. Press your weight down evenly through the four corners of the feet. Let the knees be soft. Lightly engage the quadriceps to stabilize the pelvis.
2. Exhale. Elongate the spine. Roll the shoulders down. Engage the abdominal muscles slightly.
3. Gaze directly in front of you, keeping the gaze soft or close the eyes if you like.
4. Inhale, reaching the arms overhead, palms facing each other. Keep the head centered between the arms, the shoulders soft on the back.
5. Fan the fingers wide, keeping the arms straight up, gaze soft and forward or eyes gently closed.
6. Breathe in strength, feeling yourself rooted, grounded and connected.
7. Exhale, let arms slowly come back to your sides.
Supta Matseyandrasana: Supine Twist
Cleanses body tissues, bringing new oxygen and nutrients to the cells, flushes out toxins and unclugs energy channels from physical, emotional, and mental blocks, rejuvenating the entire body/mind

1. Lie with your back flat on the mat, arms extended to the side in “T” position palms up or down.
2. Press out through fingertips, feet, and crown.
3. Place right foot on left leg, slightly above the knee.
4. Exhale, engaging the abdominal muscles, bringing the right knee across the body towards the floor on the left side.
5. Keeping the arms and shoulders on the floor, flex the left foot and press out through the heel.
6. Inhale and exhale finding full expression of the twist, being mindful of your breath and not pushing past your edge in the pose.
7. To release, exhale. Bringing the knee and torso back to center.
8. Return the right leg to the floor and feel the effects of the twist.
9. When you are ready, repeat on the left side

Legs up the wall: Vipariti Karani
Brings new oxygen and improved blood flow to the body (the benefit of the pose happens both during the pose and in the release of the pose), restores balance and equilibrium to nervous system.

1. Come to a seated position close to and facing the wall.
2. Bring the torso onto the floor and begin to position the legs up the wall.
3. Find a comfortable position, backside either right against the wall or legs at more of a diagonal.
4. You may choose to use a blanket or bolster to add more support to the pose (see the Yoga Journal website for more specifics).
5. Let the palms face up and the eyes close if that feels good for you and maintain the pose for 5-15 minutes letting the breath flow naturally through the body.
6. To come out of the pose, slowly bend the knees and gently roll to one side. Remain in a fetal position for a few breaths before slowly pressing yourself up into a seated position. Observe the body and breath, feeling the effects of the pose.
Additional Resources:

Journey of Awakening: A Meditator’s Guidebook by Ram Dass

The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice by T. K. V. Desikachar

Kripalu Yoga: A Guide to Practice On and Off the Mat by Richard Faulds

The Body Remembers by Babette Rothschild

Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman

http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/01/eight-weeks-to-a-better-brain/


http://www.wholeliving.com/134775/therapy-mat-how-yoga-can-treat-depression

http://www.yogajournal.com/