Mind-Body Practices 
for Fatigue and Brain Fog 
With Nancy O'Brien, C-IAYT, certified yoga therapist

AN INVITATION TO BE KIND TO YOURSELF

A Practice of Self-Compassion
* Imagine someone, or a group, that it is easy to feel compassion for.  
* Breathe into that feeling of compassion in your heart.  
* Breathe out compassion toward that person or group. Do this for a few breaths.  
* Then, switch out your own image for that person’s or group's and breathe in compassion for yourself. You deserve it, living with the challenges of spondylitis and related conditions.  
* Breathe out an intention of compassion toward yourself, just as you had for the other person or group.  
* Try this with several breaths. Repeat regularly. 😊

Accept yourself exactly where you are at this moment with compassion.
TAKE MINI-RESTS

—Take real breaks throughout the day. Turn off your computer, your cell phone, the TV. Take a break from eating or reading. Focus on your breath.

BOX BREATH 3, 4, 5

Try this accessible practice, especially when you need some peace and clarity and it’s hard to come by. (It’s often associated with a breathing practice Navy Seals like to use.)

—First, relax and make yourself as comfortable as possible, with compassion.
—As you breathe in, use your hand to trace the side of an imaginary box, bottom to top, counting comfortably to 3. You can also just imagine tracing a box if moving your arm is not possible at the moment.
—Hold your breath gently as your hand traces across the top of the imaginary box, counting comfortably to 4. 
—Breathe out as you trace the other side of the box, top to bottom, counting comfortably to 5.
—Hold your breath gently as you complete tracing the box, crossing the hand back across to your starting point. Repeat.

OWN THE MOMENT – MOUNTAIN POSE

Become still, powerful, majestic – like a mountain – whether you are riding an elevator, standing in line for groceries, waiting for a bus or just gazing out a window at work, standing, seated or reclining.

—Envision grounding and centering yourself, whether through your feet, your seat or on your back. Become very present. Embody exactly how you are in the moment – not how you wish you were or how you think you should be – with compassion for yourself.
—Feel a bit of a lift in the arches of your feet, your leg muscles, your pelvis, your heart and the top of your head.
—Relax your shoulders and arms.
Imagine from the waist down you are a mountain below ground, surrounded by bedrock.
—From the waist up, imagine effortlessly rising, like a mountain above ground, the top of the head a bit closer to the sky with your next breath.
—Become for a moment – or two or three – your mountain, centered, balanced, powerful and still.

**DEEP RELAXATION – THE GOLD STANDARD OF REDUCING STRESS AND RESTORING ENERGY**

1. Move, circle, wiggle, then gently tense and release each part of the body, as long as it does not cause or aggravate pain, beginning with the feet and legs, going up through the hips, torso, arms, and including the face. As you tense, inhale, and exhale as you release.

2. Vow to stay as still as possible and silently ask each part of the body to relax and let go. Begin with the toes, then continue with the feet, legs, fingers, arms, shoulders, spine, hips, abdomen, chest, throat and neck, and all parts of the face. Observe the entire body completely relaxed for a minute.

3. Without changing the inhalation or exhalation, just watch the gentle wave of the breath in the body. Become a silent witness to the breath for about a minute.
4. Bring the focus to the mind and let all thoughts, sounds, feelings and distractions come and go like clouds. Honor the mind. Release the mind. Become a silent witness to the mind for about a minute.

5. Take a step back from the mind, the body and the breath. Go deeper into your own sense of wholeness and peace. Allow that peace to fill you and surround you, each cell. Rest deeply here for a time (five minutes is the ideal minimum – and there is no limit on how long this can last) and enjoy it.

When you want to bring yourself out of Deep Relaxation, begin to gently deepen the breath. After a few deep breaths, letting go of anything that does not serve you as you exhale, begin to invite some movement back into the fingers and toes, arms and legs, then give yourself a big stretch. Move around a bit, keeping that sense of relaxation. Then slowly reenter your day or night, feeling gratitude for reducing your stress and bringing yourself this peace.

_For my deep relaxation, produced with Hospital for Special Surgery's Patient Education Department, Google Nancy O'Brien and meditation, and the YouTube video will pop up._

Be sure any yoga you do is with a teacher or therapist knowledgeable about your condition. For well-trained and experienced yoga teachers and yoga therapists, see arthritis.yoga and yogatherapy.health.

—Follow me at NancyObrienYoga on Facebook.