

pure nurture

P R E N A T A L Y O G A

EASE COMMON PREGNANCY PAIN
AND DISCOMFORT WITH YOGA



K R I S T Y S . R O D R I G U E Z



Pure Nurture

EASE COMMON PREGNANCY PAIN AND
DISCOMFORT WITH YOGA

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a Healthy Baby**

by Kristy S. Rodriguez

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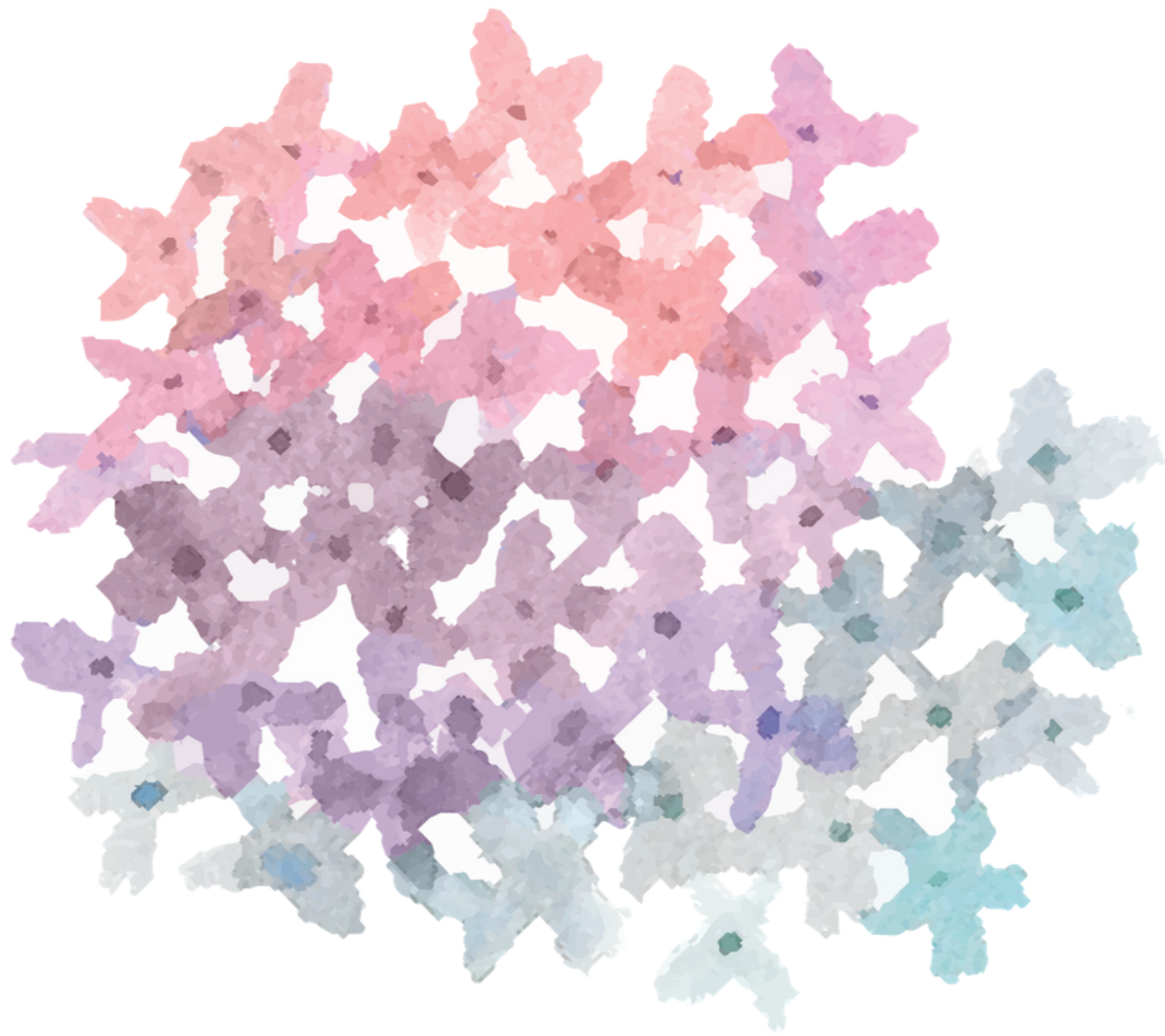
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"Yoga can create space where there was compression, can make open what was closed and can make soft our hard and abrasive edges.

The process of pregnancy itself opens and expands our hearts and our capacity to love."

-Tara Lee, Pregnancy Health Yoga



I N T R O D U C T I O N



INTRODUCTION

Yoga supports you in finding balance and union in all aspects of your life. It will improve your physical strength, flexibility, and mental acuity. It also cultivates a strong connection to the present moment. The effects of a yoga practice will relax your body and activate your parasympathetic nervous system (aka “rest and digest” system, and the opposite of the fight-or-flight response).

Prenatal yoga offers you time to disconnect from the outside world. Leave your cell phone and your to do list outside of the room, along with your shoes and bag. This is an opportunity to have some quiet “me time” and to connect with your growing baby, just the two of you, especially if you have other children at home.



This is not to say that you cannot recharge while in cycle class or out for a run; there is, however, a great benefit to slowing down, placing your left hand on your belly and your right hand on your heart, and sending a loving thought to your baby.

You will be running around nonstop once your little one arrives, and “me time” will become a rare gift for which we have to create space. Yoga is an opportunity to learn how the quiet times balance the higher energy ones.

Yoga is more than a series of postures/poses or stretching. It encompasses breathing techniques, as well as meditation and mindfulness, guided imagery, and relaxation. The main focus of prenatal yoga is to create a sense of ease for the mother and baby.

The three main components of prenatal yoga are:

- 1) Pranayama—the use of breath and breathing
- 2) Asana—the postures and poses; and
- 3) Savasana—the relaxation that comes at the end.





P R E N A T A L
Y O G A



BENEFITS OF PRENATAL YOGA

The benefits of prenatal yoga go beyond only the physical stretching of muscles and strength building. Yoga is a holistic practice, which benefits body, mind, and spirit.

Creating a regular yoga practice will support both you and your baby physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The benefits one can experience are endless; however, below is a list of the most common benefits one can experience by practicing prenatal yoga. Remember, when you practice prenatal yoga, both you and your baby will benefit. Self-care is baby care!



Prenatal Yoga Benefits

- Increases muscle strength
- Creates a sense of community
- Calms nervous system
- Brings more oxygen into the body
- Improves circulation
- Reduces swelling and varicose veins
- Increases perineal strength
- Normalizes blood pressure
- It feels good!



T H E P O S E S



THE POSES

Practicing the physical postures of yoga can be both invigorating and relaxing. Prenatal yoga provides an opportunity for you to balance strength and ease (sthira and sukha), just as you will do during labor and delivery. I have highlighted six postures here for you to try and, if possible, practice daily. Each will ultimately help to prepare your body for the physical changes of pregnancy, alleviating any discomfort that may result, as well as preparing for the process of childbirth. If you are new to yoga, please speak with a trained and experienced prenatal yoga teacher (P-RYT) for additional guidance and assistance.



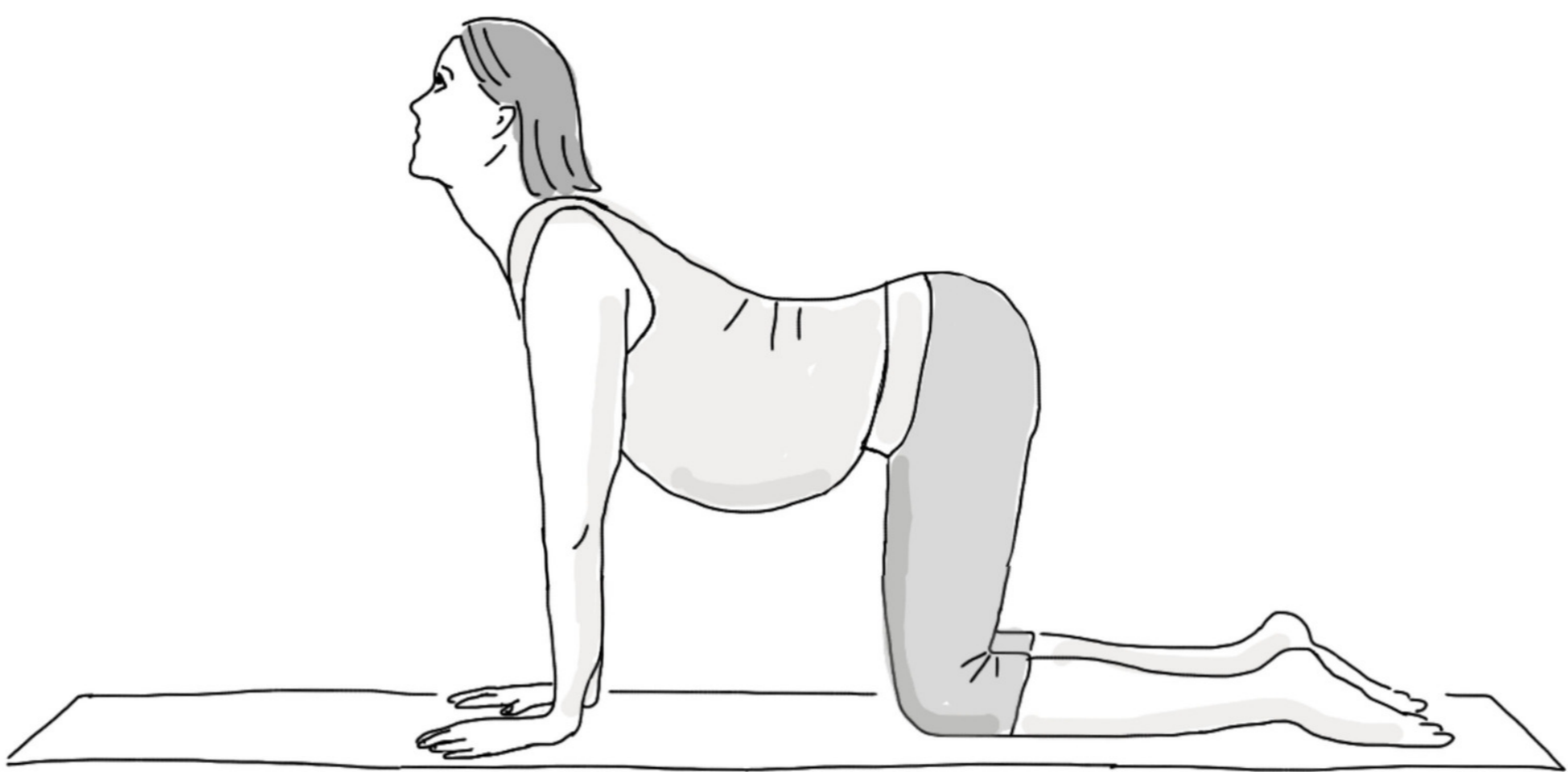
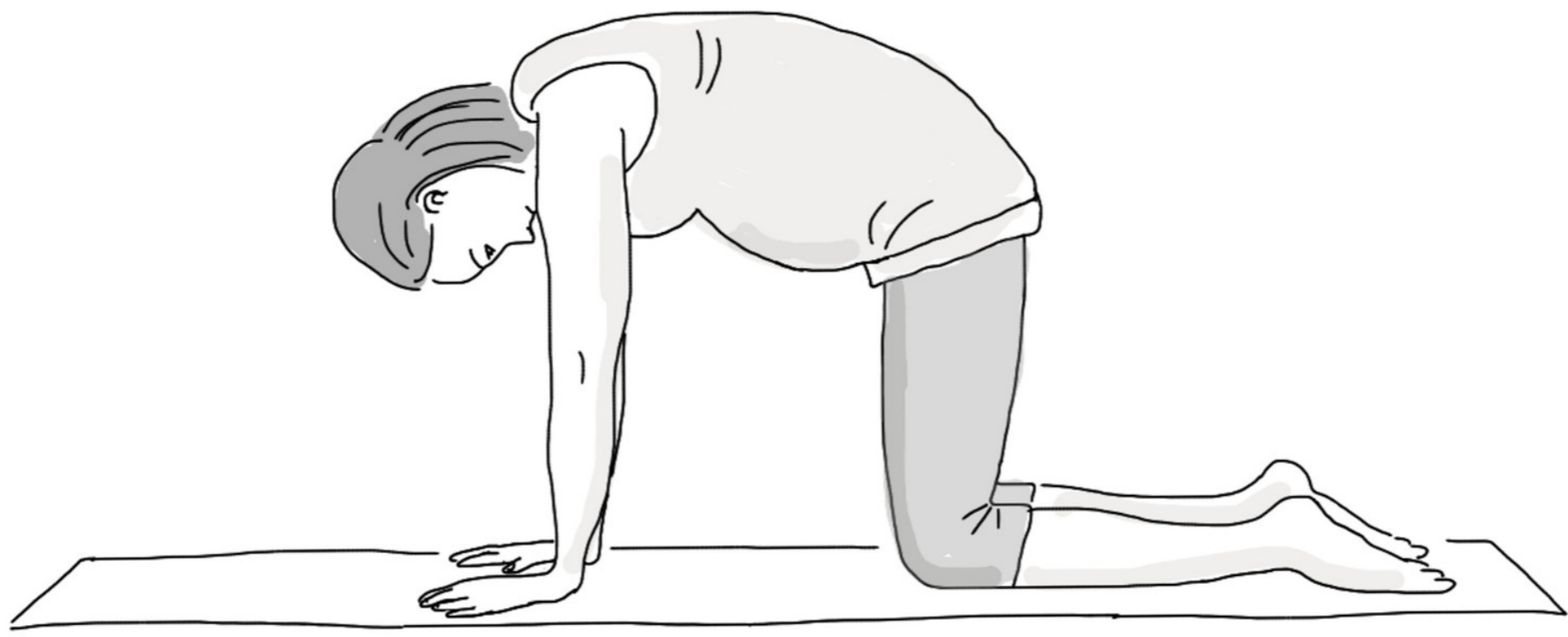
Mountain Pose

Mountain Pose is the foundation for all yoga postures. As your body changes during pregnancy, so will your posture. Your lower back may begin to sway (arch) as the weight of your baby pulls your belly forward. Your shoulders may begin to round as your breasts swell. For these reasons, it is essential to focus on maintaining proper alignment in order to avoid aches and pains down the road.

Begin in bare feet on a flat surface, standing with your feet a little bit wider than hip-width apart. This helps create a more secure and steady base. Lift up all ten toes, spread them wide, then place them gently on the floor again.

Sway gently forward and backward, finding your body weight centered between the soles and heels of your feet. Allow your arms to relax by your sides, turning your palms to face forward, thumbs pointing away from your body. Your shoulders relax down and back, without strain, away from your ears. Grow tall through the crown of your head, toward the sky, allowing your spine to lengthen.

Your chin is parallel to the ground (imagine you are holding a large orange under your chin). Soften your gaze (drishti) and focus on one point in front of you. Take five to seven deep, relaxed breaths. Release yourself from the pose.



Cat-Cow Pose

This is an all-time favorite of pregnant mamas, because it does so many good things: develops strength and increases energy, helps to relieve tension in the back, and also encourages the baby to move into the ideal birthing position.

To begin, come into a tabletop position on the floor, knees under your hips (hip-width apart) and hands under your shoulders with fingers spread wide like starfish. Gently micro-bend your elbows to bring the weight of your body into your muscles and out of your joints, then turn your elbows slightly inward so that the pits of your elbows are facing each other.

Your drishti is on the floor, either between or just in front of your hands, allowing your neck to be an extension of your spine. Inhale deeply. As you exhale, lift and round your spine toward the ceiling, gently hugging your baby in. As you're doing this, tuck your chin into your chest (cat pose). Next, inhale as you drop your belly toward the floor, bringing your head up and lifting your chest toward the front of the room. Your spine is now arched, with your tailbone lifting toward the ceiling (cow pose). Repeat five times (one cat and one cow represent one repetition). Let your breath lead you from one posture to the other, ensuring that you never hold or restrict the breath.



Cobbler's Pose

This posture allows the hips, pelvis, and the inner and outer thighs to open and stretch. Sitting upright in this pose will allow you to feel the stretch in the legs and hips. If you'd like to stretch the back, carefully lean forward bringing your chest closer to your feet. This will stretch the lower back. Practicing this posture will prepare your body for the necessary expansion during birth.

Sit on a folded blanket. Bring the soles of your feet together and let your knees drop out to the sides. This supports an opening of the hips and a stretching of the inner thighs. If the stretch is too intense, place blocks or another folded blanket under you for added support.

Draw your heels toward your groin and place your hands on top of your feet or on your ankles. Hold this seated position for five deep breaths. To come safely out of this pose, place your hands to the outside of your knees and slowly draw them together. Extend your legs out in front of you and shake them out gently.

*Variation for Cobbler's Pose: Seated cat-cow will warm up the spine and stretch the muscles in your back. You can also do hip circles (hip rolls), which help to open the hips and relieve tension and tightness.



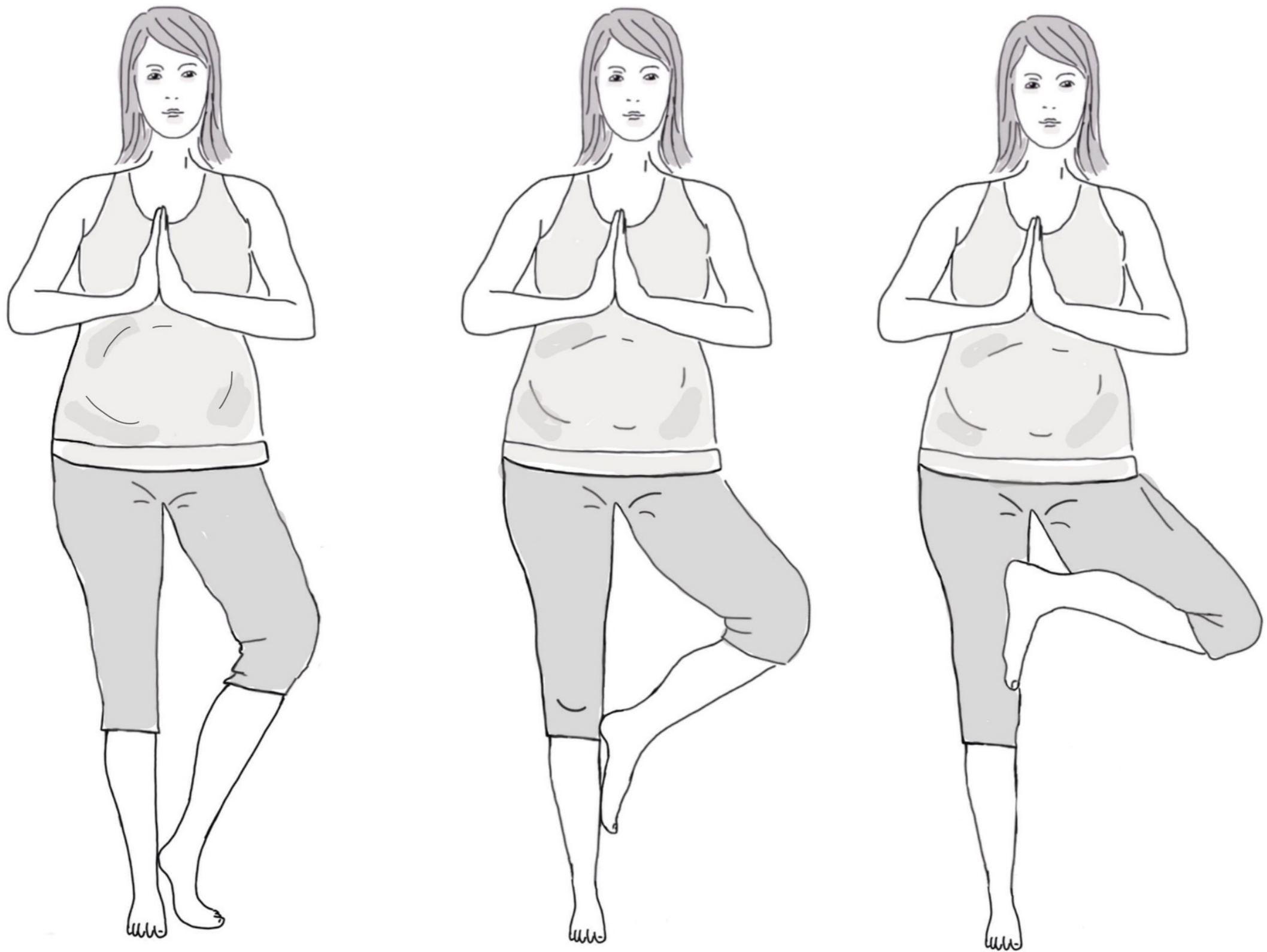
Warrior II

This is a powerful and grounding posture, which provides an excellent opportunity to practice balancing strength with ease. This posture is beneficial because it stretches the hips, groin, and shoulders, and can relieve backaches. It will also help you to build stamina.

To begin, stand with your legs as wide apart as is comfortable. Pivot your right foot to face away from you, then point your left foot in forty-five degrees, so that your toes are at a forty-five-degree angle, angled toward your front foot. Lower your hips into a lunge, bringing your right knee to a ninety-degree angle directly over your ankle.

Raise your arms until they are parallel to the floor, extending out over your front and back legs. Gaze out over the fingertips of your right hand. Tuck your tailbone slightly down, and hug your baby and belly gently in toward your spine. Breathe deeply for five counts.

To come out of the pose, straighten your front leg, pivot your right foot in toward your center, and slowly walk your feet back together. Repeat on the left side.



Tree Pose

All balancing postures seek to create harmony between the two sides of the body. This pose balances both sides of the brain, as well as the systems of the body. It also helps pregnant women find a new center of gravity as their bellies expand and their equilibrium is altered.

Begin standing in Mountain Pose (as described above). Ground down through your left foot, creating a strong, stable base. Place the sole of your right foot against the inside of the standing ankle, calf, or inner thigh (avoid placing your foot on your knee joint).

Join your hands together in front of your heart center, pressing your palms together. Set your drishti to one unmoving spot in front of you, and take five calm, focused breaths. It is okay if you wobble out. Simply come back to the posture and try again. Repeat on the other side.

Other arm positions include reaching your arms over your head toward the sky. Palms can press together or keep your arms reaching high and shoulder width apart. One other option that allows you to connect with your baby and your growing belly is to place one hand on top of your belly, the other hand below, essentially cradling your baby/belly.



Relaxation Pose

At the end of most yoga classes or practices, everyone rests in final relaxation, or Savasana. Savasana means “corpse pose” in Sanskrit, the intention being complete and total stillness so that the body may become calm and the mind may focus more clearly. It allows for a time when the energy generated by a physical practice can be absorbed by the body. This will balance the nervous system, which encourages healing and relaxation.

Since it is advised that women not lay on their backs after the first trimester, I recommend that you lay on your left side with a bolster or a firm pillow supporting the top leg and a folded blanket under the head. This position will allow the spine and hips to remain in alignment and prevent pressure on the vagus nerve. It also allows for deep relaxation.

The image above shows a woman with one hand on her heart and one hand on her belly. After resting in final relaxation, or instead of resting in savasana, it can be extremely healing and relaxing to rest in comfortable seated position (shown in drawing above) and take a few moments to connect with your own heart and with your baby.

This is a time to cultivate a sense of gratitude. Bring one thing or a few things to mind that you feel grateful for in this moment. Sense how it feels to be grateful and breathe deeply. It is also a time to ask what you need more of or less of to feel your best. You can also ask your baby what he or she needs more of or less of to feel calm and healthy.

To learn more about prenatal yoga, meditation, nutrition, and other ways to create a healthy pregnancy and new life, check out our recent book, *Pure Nurture: A Holistic Guide to a Healthy Baby*.

Available at purenurture.com/book and on Amazon.com.



pure nurture
A HOLISTIC GUIDE
TO A HEALTHY BABY



About the Author

Kristy S. Rodriguez, pre- and postnatal wellness expert and advocate, is the owner and founder of Pure Nurture, LLC, a business devoted to educating and inspiring women to nurture and nourish themselves through pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. As a Holistic Health Coach and Registered Yoga Teacher specializing in pre- and postnatal wellness, Kristy works with individual clients, as well as teaching classes and workshops, both in person and online.

Her passion for prenatal health and wellness began while she was pregnant with her first daughter. After her pregnancy with her second daughter, she decided to dedicate her work to supporting women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, as well as mothers of newborns. With her cumulated years of experience in education and health, she brings extensive knowledge, personal experience, and deep compassion to her students. In a supportive, non-judgmental way, Kristy helps her clients and students live healthier, happier, more energetic lives.

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