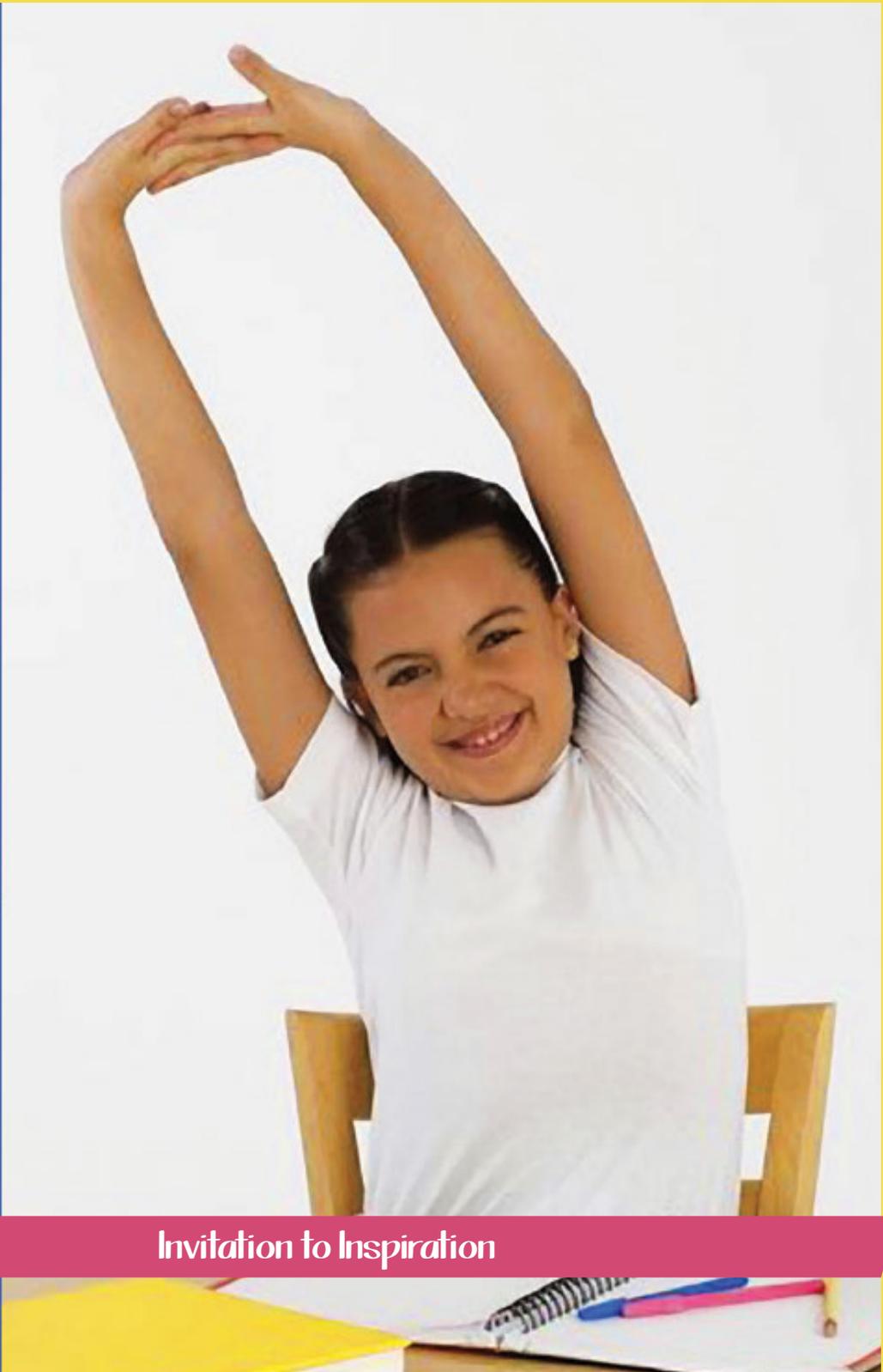


FRIDAY FREEBIE

Breathe, Stretch, Write

FREE FITCH

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Invitation to Inspiration

The Standing Exercises

We stand in line at the grocery store and the bank. Some people stand in food lines and unemployment lines. We stand first thing when we get out of bed, and are happy to flop down at night. We stand back from things, stand up for things. We take a stand. We under-stand. Standing is an outstanding accomplishment.

All of the following poses begin with the idea that standing, taking our stand in the world, is not easy or mindless: it can be one of the most challenging things to do. Think about Bob Marley's "Stand up for your Rights." Listen to "Stand by Me."

Begin an unrhymed poem called "I Understand" and fill in the blanks. What do you stand for? Can you find a funny twist on standing up for things? *Stand up for lemons! They're always in a squeeze.*

Seriously, when we stand in these stretches, we stand with intention. We are trying to keep head up, neck straight, spine straight, shoulders away from the earlobes and pulled down the back, shoulder blades separated, and other limbs relaxed—including your chin and jaw!

We are trying to find our ground, hold ourselves steady. Anchor. Root. Maintain an erect posture, not a lazy slump forward. Think upwards, onwards. Walk with a book balanced on your head!

Lots going on! Can you relax with all this standing at attention?!

2. The Frame

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Socrates said the unexamined life is not worth living. To write is to observe, to examine. Part of what we need to do is stop and look—to freeze-frame an image in our minds or register an emotional connection in our body. So we begin with looking at ourselves. And out from ourselves.



Breathe

1. Always breathe in and out through your nose.
2. Place your hand close to, but not on, your belly near your navel. Inhale. As you do, gently push your belly toward your hand.
3. Exhale. Pull your belly in. Imagine your navel touching your spine.
4. Do this three times.
5. Return to normal breathing.

Stretch

1. Stand heels together, toes touching, hands at your sides.
2. As you inhale, raise your hands over your head.
3. Bring your hands down so you cup your ears with your hands, elbows out to the sides.
4. Frame your face with your hands.
5. Move your hands to the top of your head. Interlace your fingers
6. Exhale and lower your arms back to your sides.
7. Breathe three times.

Write

OUT OF THE FRAME

- Everyone gets a painting or picture to look at. Study it, pass it around.
- Write for five minutes.
- These prompts might be useful: What is the story you found in photo or painting? Can it be dramatized? Can you add dialogue to the scene by imagining conversation of the people (if any) in the piece?

Fitness Tip

- Find a poem you like. Frame it!

8. The Painter

Words are the colors a writer paints with. Sometimes we see the scenes before we write them. Creating scenes can be like rolling a movie in your head. This exercise is meant to bring out the inner artist in everyone. Try to go from the pose to writing without thinking too much. Turn the imaginary paintbrush into a pen. Go ahead make a colorful splash—a mess on the page. (Try this with colored chalk or markers.)



Breathe

1. Always breathe in and out through your nose.
2. Place your hand close to, but not on, your belly near your navel. Inhale. As you do, gently push your belly toward your hand.
3. Exhale. Pull your belly in. Imagine your navel touching your spine.
4. Do this three times.
5. Return to normal breathing.

Stretch

1. Hold one arm as if holding a palette.
2. Using the other hand, pretend to dip a paintbrush in the paint on the palette.
3. Swirl your painting arm in circles as if painting on large canvas.
4. Make smaller circles as if adding minute detail.
5. Repeat on the opposite side.

Write

1. COLOR YOUR WORLD

Decorate or describe a room for five minutes. Your room can be however you want it to be: messy or organized; ugly or beautiful.

2. YOU ARE THE ARTIST

Draw/doodle a cartoon and caption that you think makes commentary on something current in the news.