

51. Bear Walk

Touch the earth with your hands and knees; embody the bulk and spirit of the Bear—it can be very powerful. Growl and breathe. Feel the muscles in your back stretch and the energy move through your neck. Feel the entire release from deep in your throat. Be fierce...or funny. Are you ready to hibernate or to protect your cubs? How do you rear up on your hind legs? Experiment and be any four-legged animal you want—feel the shift in energy as you try to inhabit the essence of a coyote, or zebra, or warthog.



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. Get down on all fours.
2. Begin crawling and growling.
3. Keeping distance from others, growl in their direction.
4. Crawl backward. Crawl into a “cave,” real (under a table) or imaginary.
5. Relax on your back, feet and hands in the air. Continue roaring.
6. Hibernate. Snore.

Write

1. FAIRY TALE

Remember a favorite story from a fairy tale, like Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Imagine you are in a coffee shop with a character from that story. What would you say to each other?

I was once having lunch with a children's librarian, when I walked a woman who looked exactly like a character from one of my favorite books of all time—Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney. “Look!” I said to Linda, my librarian friend. “When you can, look over your left shoulder at the woman seated at the table. Who does that woman remind you of?” She looked as discreetly as possible. “Miss Rumphius,” she replied. Exactly! Those stories and characters we love sometimes have a way of coming to life.

2. MY BEAR CAVE

Write about where you would go to hibernate.

3. DARE TO BE

Research animals from a particular place; e.g., the savannah in Africa. Find out how they live and what their relationships are with other animals. Do you dare write from a hyena's point of view?

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.

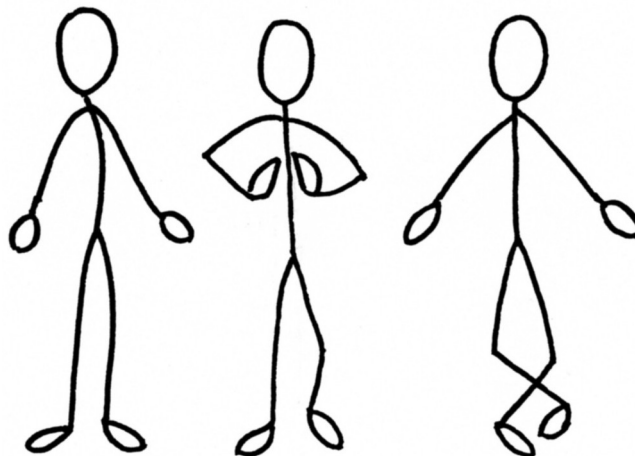
—Albert Einstein

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

—George Bernard Shaw

52. Funny Walks

Walk, walk, walk. Walk until you laugh. The aim of this exercise is to get laughing. Walk, waddle, rock...and laugh.



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 in Stand on Your Own Two Feet pose (see page 22).
2. Exhale with a little “Ha!”
3. Begin penguin-walking. Giggle if you feel like it.
4. Stop and walk like a monkey, making monkey laughter sounds.
5. Hop and laugh as if you were at a funny movie.
6. Keep laughing, making funny faces at others.
7. Stop; connect with breath; return to normal breathing.

Write

1. WALKING THE WALK
 - Write a story from a penguin’s point of view.
 - Write comparing monkeys with something out of control in your life.
2. FUNNY SONG

Write a stanza to begin a corny love song.

Laughter Yoga combines laughter with yogic breathing exercises. It is a perfect way to laugh and get exercise at the same time. It approaches laughter as a body exercise so it’s easy to laugh even if you’re depressed or in a bad mood. I’ve tried it, and it works.

—Oprah Winfrey