

Bad Day Toolbox



Somatic Exercises for Self Care

Karen Goldsum

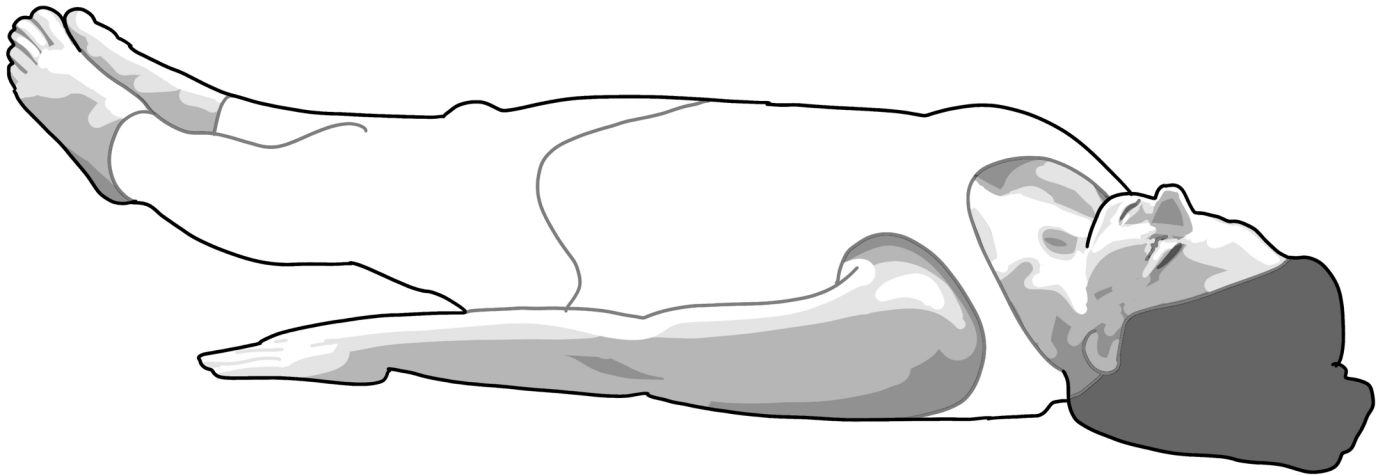
How Trauma Affects Your Body

Acting as a chronic stressor, trauma keeps the body in a prolonged nervous system activation. This causes your body to persistently release cortisol and adrenaline, which can then cause a bevy of problems. In the short term, this can result in hypertension, sleep disturbances, rapid heart rate, fatigue, flashbacks, and dissociation. In the long term, people with trauma are affected by gastrointestinal distress, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke. Trauma is not just a mental memory. It gets stuck in the viscera.

In summary, trauma is real bad.

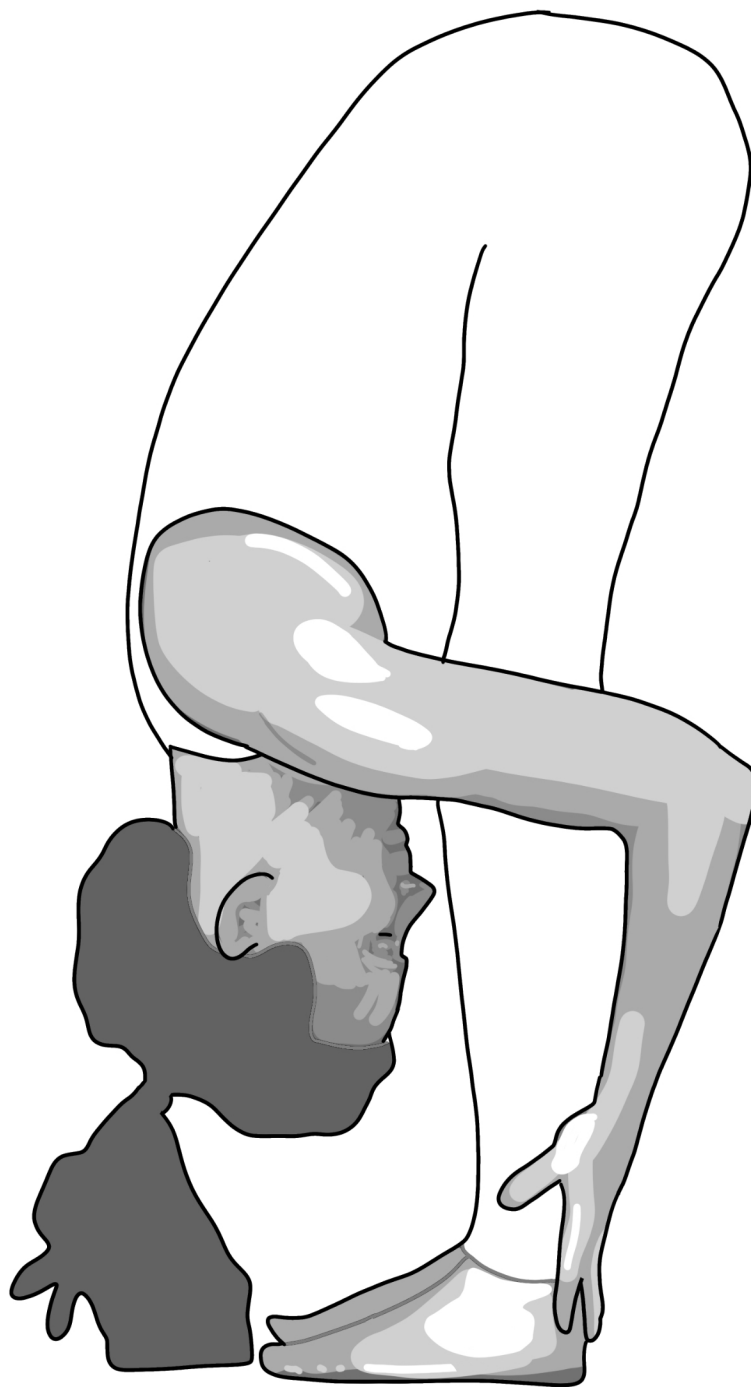
In order to heal, our bodies must learn that the danger has passed and we are safe. All of the techniques in this zine are “somatic,” meaning they are meant to help you reconnect with your body and release strain. Somatic exercises focus on slow movements that focus on your internal sensations. Some of the benefits of somatic exercises are chronic pain relief, reduced stress, improved mobility, and better posture. Try these somatic exercises and see how they can help.

BODY SCAN MEDITATION



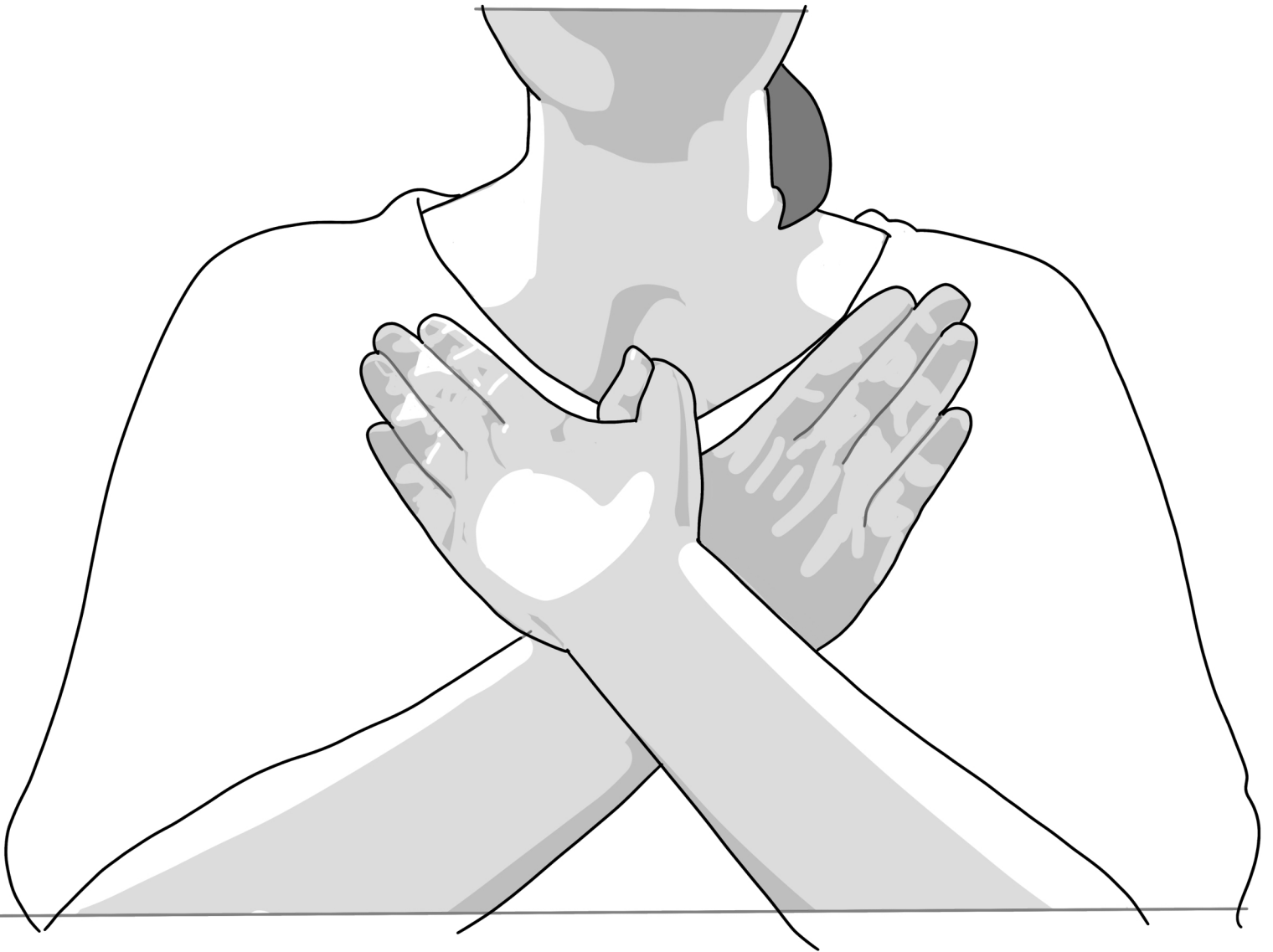
Lie in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and start by focusing your attention on your feet. Notice the sensations there, then slowly work your way to your ankles and do the same. Work your way up to your head, going body part by body part. As you notice areas of tension, take note and consciously breathe into them to release the tension.

STANDING FORWARD FOLD



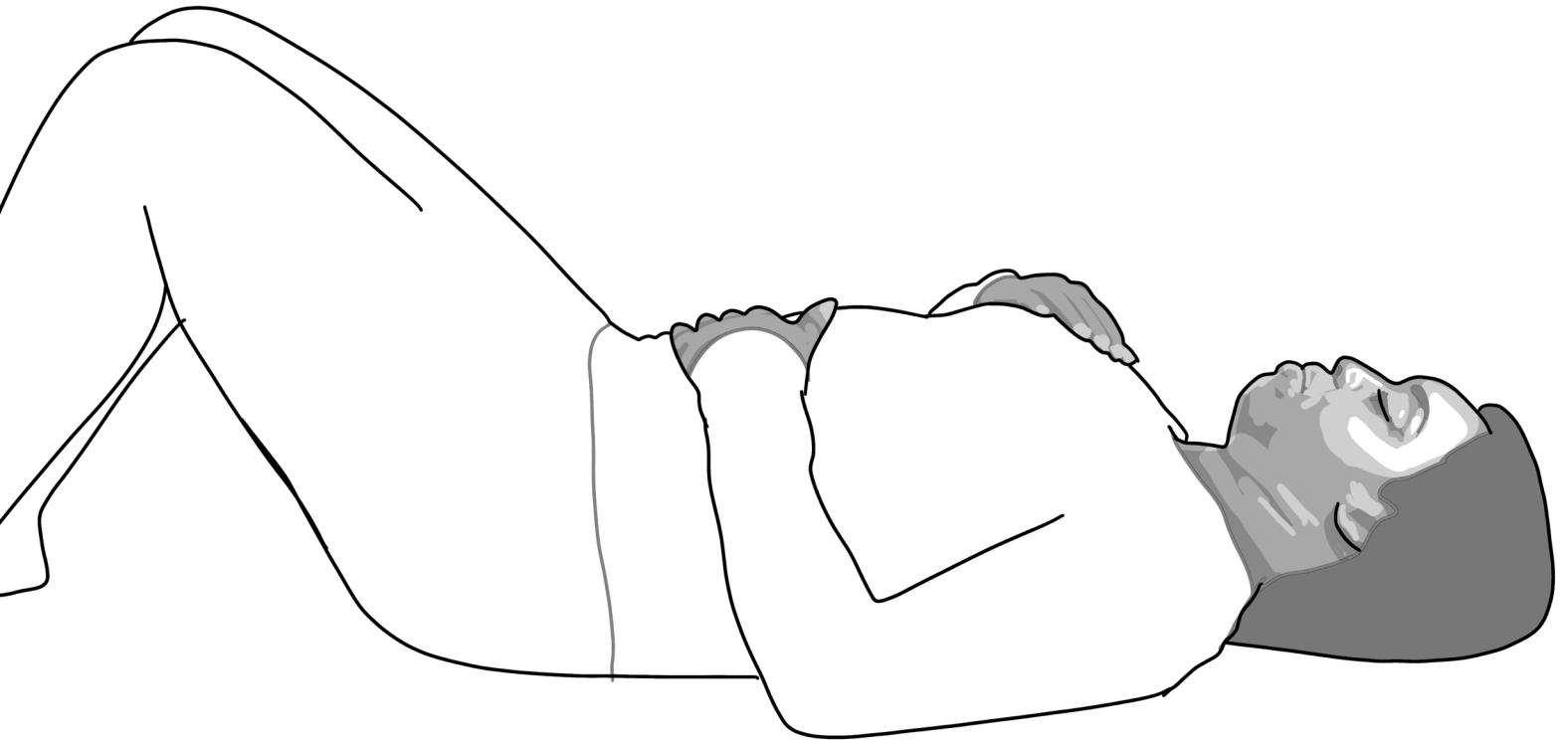
Stand with your feet hip-width apart. With a gentle bend in your knees, slowly roll forward, reaching your hands for your feet or the floor in front of you. Remember to relax your head and neck throughout.

BUTTERFLY HUG



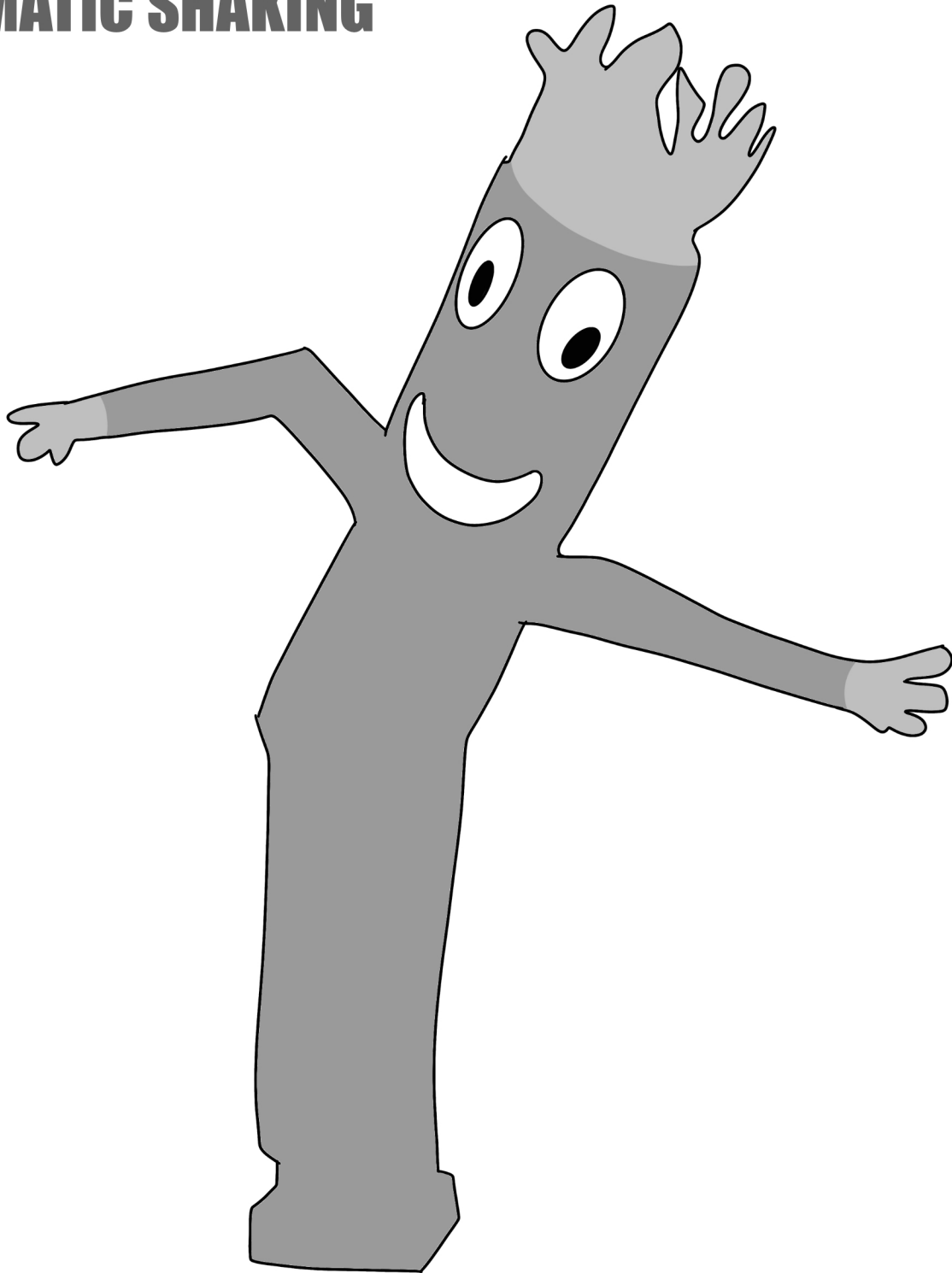
Sitting on the ground or in a comfortable chair, cross your arms over your chest and rest your palms on your shoulders. Some people interlock their thumbs before placing them on your chest. Lightly tap each shoulder in an alternating motion while taking slow, deep breaths. This is a great activity because you can do this most anywhere at work, at home, or even on the playground

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING



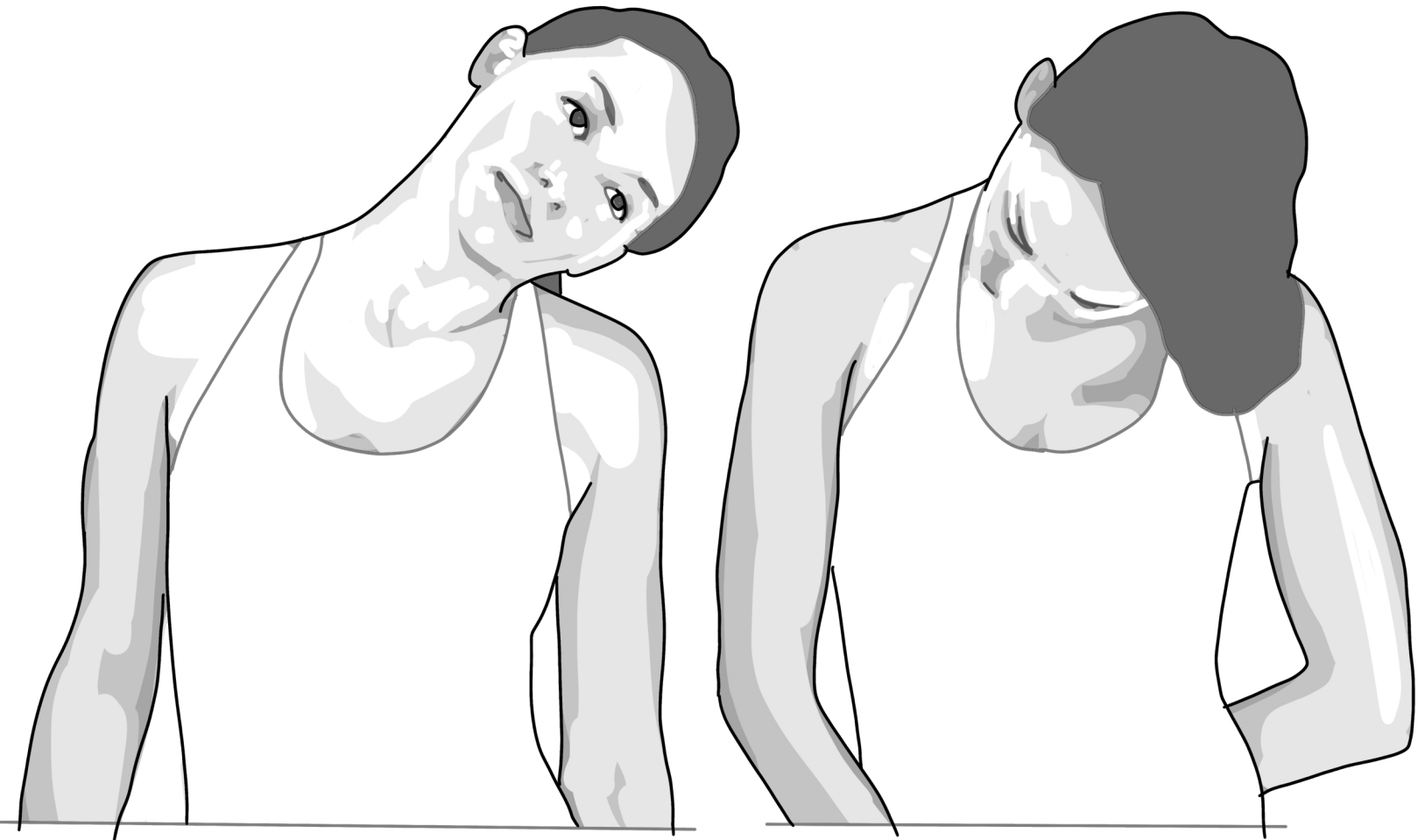
Get into a relaxed seated position or lie down on your back. Place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Now with your attention on the hand on your belly, breathe deeply, allowing your stomach and lungs to fully expand. Once you've reached your maximum, slowly exhale and repeat.

SOMATIC SHAKING



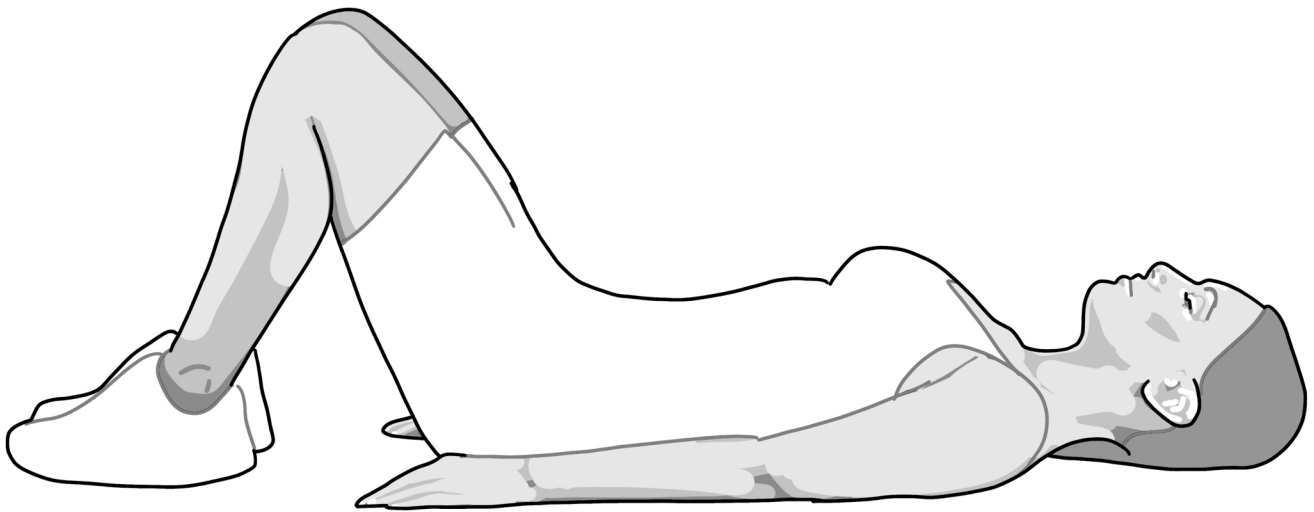
Stand in a comfortable, relaxed position with your feet shoulder-width apart. Gently shake your arms, legs, and body for a couple of minutes. Focus on the sensation of releasing tension from the body.

NECK STRETCHES



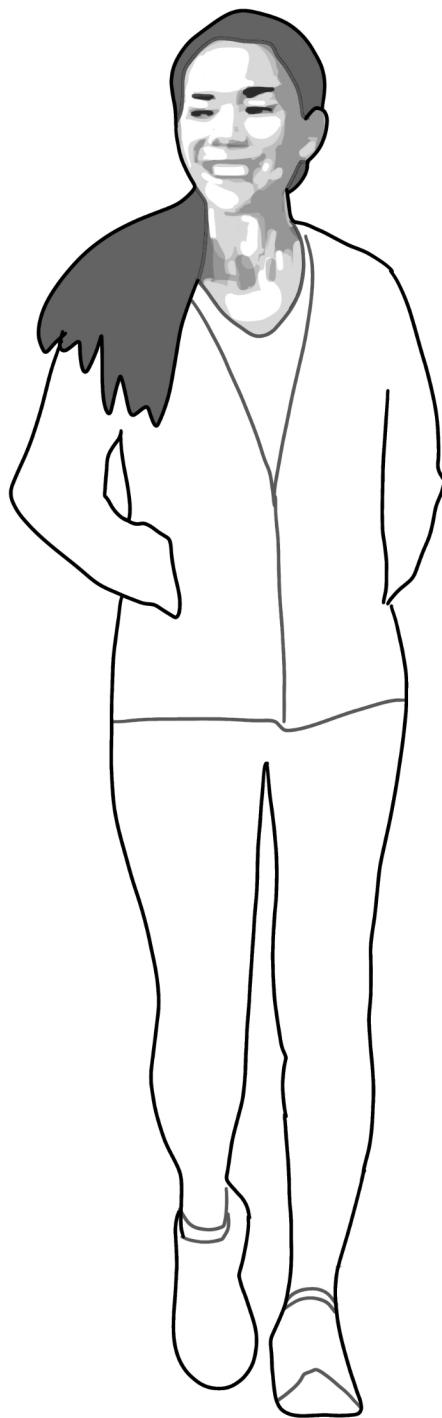
Slowly tilt your head to one side until you find a spot of tension. Hold it there for a couple of slow, deep breaths. Repeat going in a circle, tilting your head from one side to another. You can use your arm or hand to gently deepen the stretch.

PELVIC TILTS



Lying on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles, push your lower back into the floor. Or to put it another way, in a small motion, tilt your pelvis upwards toward your shoulders or ribcage and then release. It's particularly important to keep a strong mind-body connection when doing this exercise.

SOMATIC WALKING



Choose a calming environment and go for a slow, mindful walk, noticing the sensation of each step on the bottom of your foot and throughout your body. Pay attention to your breathing, posture, and the rhythm of your body movements.

CHILD'S POSE



Kneel on a soft surface such as a rug or yoga mat, then sit back on your heels and reach your arms forward in front of your head. As you relax into the pose, focus on dropping your hips toward your heels and your forehead to the floor. You can also put your arms at your sides, which is the more traditional variation.



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