

# Stretching, Meditation and Gratitude Ritual

by Geri Larkin

Stretching, meditation and gratitude make up this “easy peasy” daily ritual from writer and teacher Geri Larkin.

After some 35 years of daily spiritual practice, if I’ve learned anything at all it’s this: it doesn’t work if you don’t do it. What we seem to need, especially when we’re just beginning, is something simple that we can do anywhere. Here’s my recipe for an easy peasy morning practice.

## Choose Your Space

Identify a quiet corner in your home. If it is a corner that will let in a slice of sunlight, streetlight, or moonlight, all the better. Be creative - for some, the bathroom might be ideal. In this space, arrange a comfortable kitchen chair and light a small candle.

## Stretch

Do a couple of minutes of stretching. I suggest starting out with head-to-toe wiggling, the kind you did when you were a little kid and were too excited about something to stand still. If you can’t wiggle all of you, move the parts of you that you can. Follow this with a couple of “holding up the sky.” Reach as high as you can with both arms, keeping your hands flat as though you are balancing a tray. Hold the stretch for a count of 10, then let your arms and head hang down toward the floor. Finish up with some waist twists, letting your arms swing.

## Sit

With your eyes slightly open, sit on the chair with your back straight, feet flat on the ground, and hands in your lap. Take a few deep belly breaths and wish the world well - allow images of people, places, and things to randomly flit across your thoughts, and with each image simply think, Take good care of yourself. You’ll find that there is a slight pause after the initial rush of images. When that happens all you have to do is to breathe quietly and deeply, listening to whatever sounds are filling the space around you. If you find yourself worrying or cranky about something just tell yourself, It’s OK, and go back to listening. This is not a time for problem solving or for mentally writing that rebuttal to a tweet that nastified you. Instead, let yourself feel how good it feels to be taken care of by the world, which has given you this chair to sit on, the beauty of light from the candle, and the energy of the sounds around you. Sit like this for a few minutes, or longer if you feel like it.

## Give Thanks

To segue into the rest of the day, it helps to take a moment to identify at least three things you are grateful for. Obvious choices: your body, the chair, a mind that can think, music. Then, when you are ready, take a deep cleansing breath and head into the day.

I promise that if you do this practice every day it will change your life. Why? Because it has a way of loosening up the knots in our physical and mental bodies, giving grace the space it needs to find its way into our hearts. And with grace, anything can happen - even miracles.