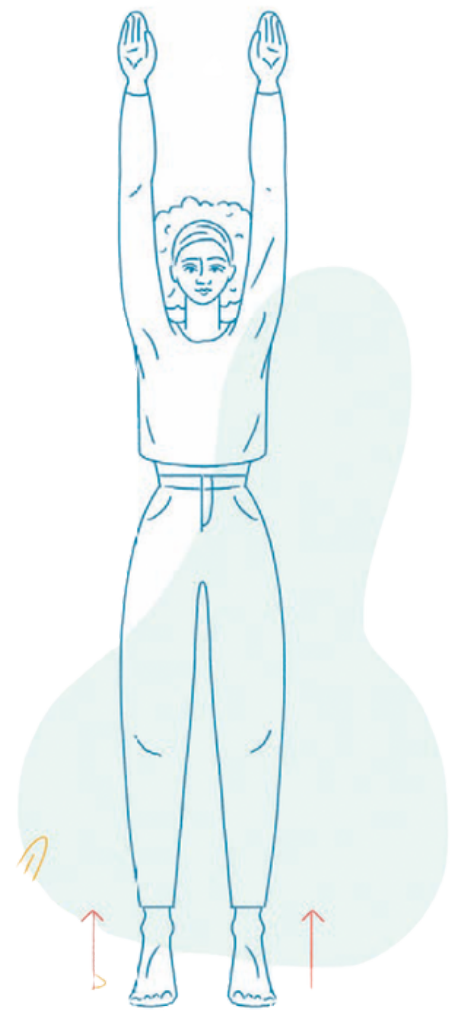


Movement to protect you from the winter blues

We all know that movement has a powerful mood boosting effect but when hibernation mode descends, it can be hard to find the motivation! Try these simple but accessible practices from Sit to Get Fit, suitable even when energy is low, to protect you from the winter blues.

Balancing Calf Raise Mountain:

Stand with your feet hip width apart, gaze forwards and palms flat on the front of your thighs. As you breathe in, raise your arms forwards and up overhead, simultaneously raising your heels, keeping your gaze forwards. Expect to wobble! As you exhale, slowly lower your heels and your hands back down, ideally both returning to their starting place at the same time. It is easier said than done! Take at least 5 of these, noticing how impossible it is to think about anything else at the same time. The perfect circuit breaker when unhelpful thoughts arise.



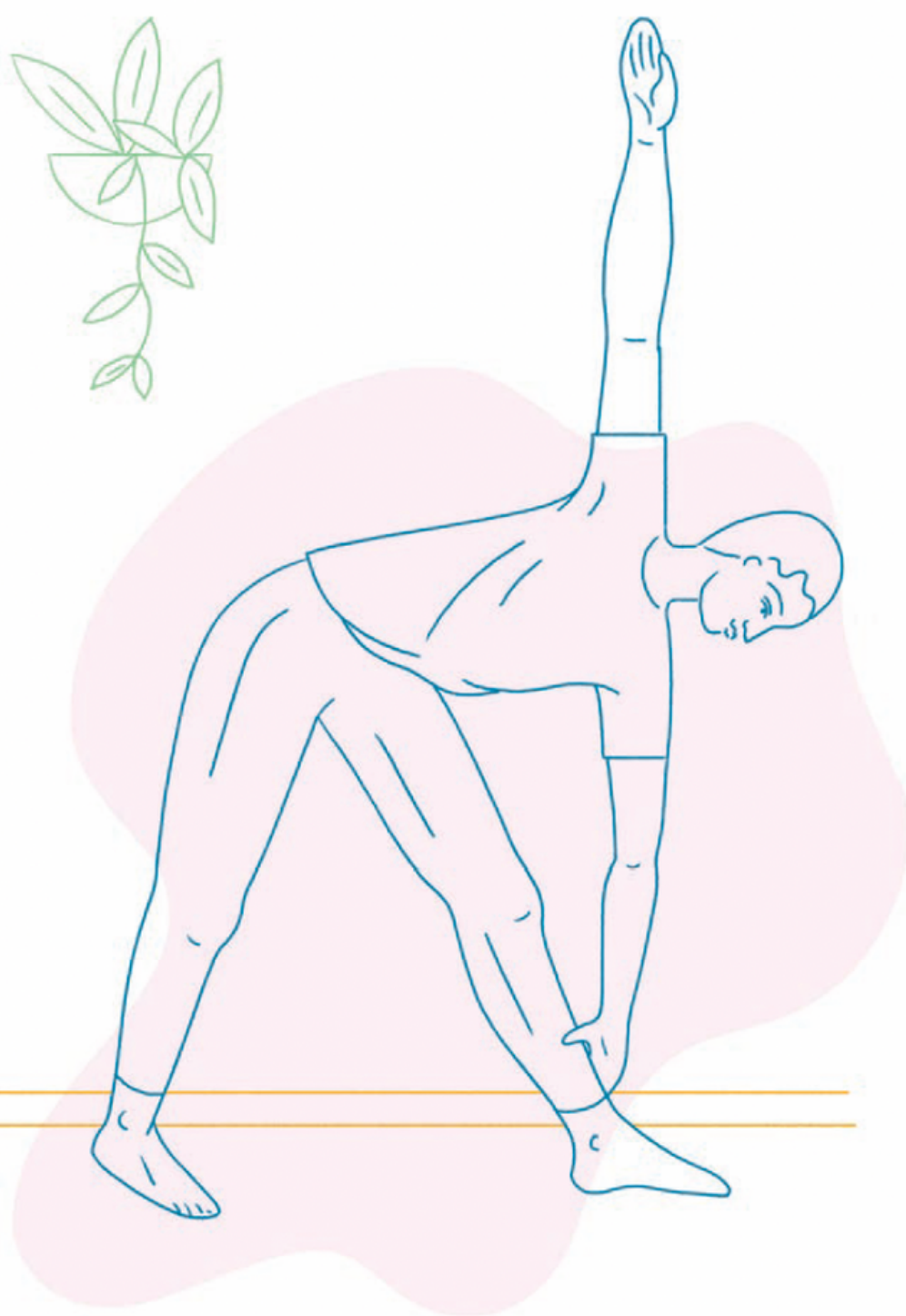
Sumo Side Bends:

Stand with your feet one and half times your shoulder width apart, toes angled outwards. Breathe in here and as you exhale, bend your knees deeply in the same direction as your toes, the deeper the knee bend, the greater the challenge. Hovering in your squat, inhale and stretch your arms out to shoulder height, exhale and reach your left arm up and over, rounding your right arm loosely to the left and banana shaping the whole left hand side of your torso. Breathe in and come back to the centre with your arms wide like wings, exhale and lift your right arm up and over, left arm rounded in front of your body, arching your right hand side. Inhale back to the centre and alternate to the sides, 3-6 times each way.



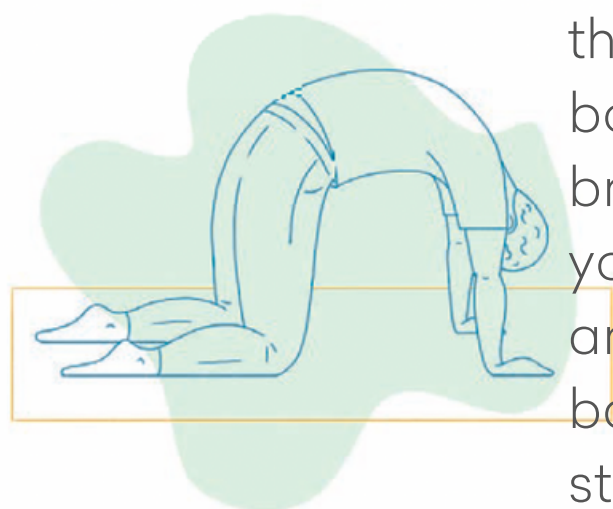
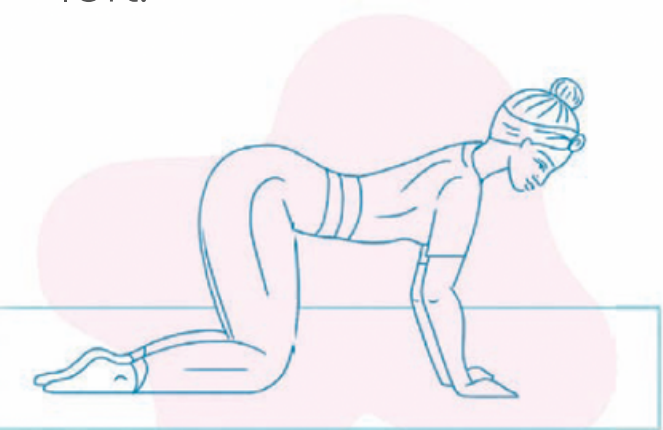
Triangle pose against the wall:

locate an expanse of wall space that you can lean back into unimpeded. Start facing away from the wall with your feet 5cm (2 inches) away from the base, hands to hips and lean your buttocks into the wall. Stride your feet one and a half times your shoulder width apart, turn your right toes to point out and slide your left heel away from you which will lean your right buttock into the wall. Keep your left leg firmly straight, bend a little your right knee and lean your shoulders evenly into the wall behind you. Without letting your right buttock or shoulders draw away from the wall, slowly slide your right hand to your right shin, hinging deeply at your right hip. Reach your left arm straight up, pressing it back into the wall for support and look down towards your right foot. This is a powerful stretch for your right inner thigh and left hand side of your chest and you'll feel the muscles behind your left shoulder leap into action. Hang out here for 5 to 10 breaths before slowly rising and taking the pose over to the left.



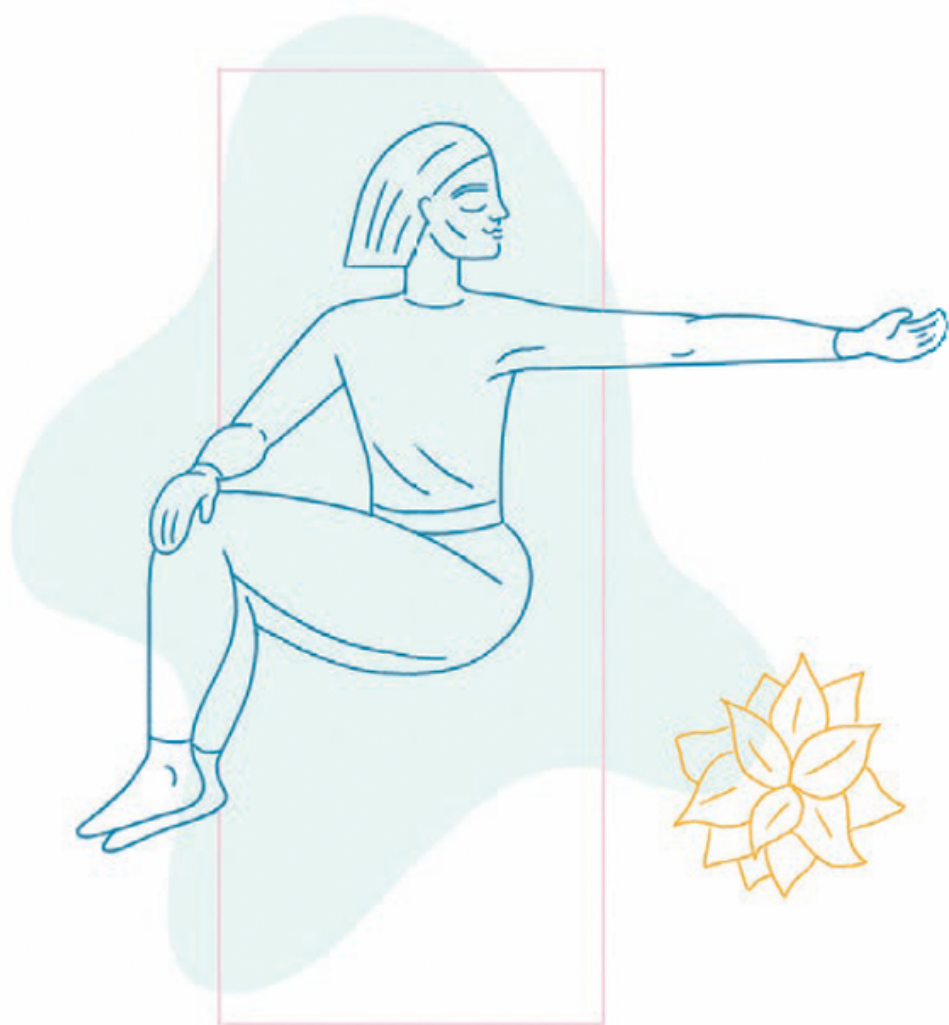
Dogtail and angry cat:

come to all fours, knees hip width apart, hands placed a little wider than shoulder width apart and fingers spread out like star fish. As you breathe in, draw your shoulders deeply away from your ears, gaze forwards (not up) keeping your neck long and raise your doggy tail high to the sky. This shape stretches the front of your body and strengthens your back. As you exhale, bring your chin to your chest, draw your navel to your spine and point your tailbone to the floor in angry cat shape. This position elongates the back of your body and strengthens your stomach muscles. Alternate between these two shapes lead by your breathing, 5 times each.



Seated knee hug twist:

Bend your right knee, keeping the sole of the foot flat on the floor and stretch your left leg straight in front of you, heel flexed. Hug your left arm around your right knee and as you breathe in, raise your right arm skywards. As you exhale, twist to the right, bringing your right hand to the floor behind you, gazing deeply over your right shoulder. Sit tall in the twist for 5-10 breaths before releasing and repeating on the other side.



Twist:

Let go with this relaxing twist. Begin with both knees drawn in to your chest, arms out wide at shoulder height. Carefully bring your knees over towards your left elbow, take hold of them with your left hand like an anchor and if comfortable for your neck, look towards your right up-turned palm. Stay for 5-10 breaths before returning to the centre and taking your knees over to the right.

This is an extract from Sit to Get Fit by Suzy Reading

