



# *Pathways to a Centered Body*

## Article Three

# Constructing Your Ideal Rest Position: Therapeutic Spinal Release



*By Donna Farhi*

### Benefits

- Lengthens and releases the spinal and psoas muscles.
- Helps to decompress the sacroiliac joint.
- Calms and steadies the nervous system.

### Contraindications

- People with disc problems should be cautious. If you feel any discomfort, this practice is not suitable for you at this time.
- Those with varicosities (varicose veins) should not place weight on the lower legs.

### You'll Need

- A yoga mat and a bolster.
- A chair.
- 2-3 blankets.



## Constructing Your Ideal Rest Position: Therapeutic Spinal Releases

Sometimes when you come to the end of your day, your legs are tired, your back aches from sitting or standing, and a profound feeling of mental fatigue washes over you. While practicing iRest<sup>®</sup> can be an uplift for depleted energies, why not potentiate the benefits of the practice by simultaneously lengthening your spine, elevating your legs, and practicing a mild inversion that can boost energy levels?

### Why

In this position, we place the legs in an upside-down all-fours position. This gently compresses the deep psoas muscles of the spine and paradoxically helps it to release. This position can also be wonderful for water retention in the feet and lower legs and act as a mild inversion to increase blood circulation to the upper body. The results can be as enlivening as a Shoulder Stand without the risks to the neck.

### How

Place a folded blanket on the seat of the chair to cushion the surface and hard edges. Cushion your yoga mat with another blanket and lie down with your torso on the floor, with your lower legs resting on the seat of the chair. Alternatively, use your living room couch (it is often the perfect height for this

practice). Ensure that your heels are supported and that your lower legs are parallel to the ground. If your heels are hanging in space, this will put strain on your lower back. If so, you may need to raise your torso by putting two folded blankets under your trunk. Now experiment with the angle between your thigh and your pelvis by moving closer to or farther away from the chair. You are searching for the point at which your femurs relax into the hip sockets and the psoas and spinal muscles soften (**Figure 1**). Stay in this pose for 5-30 minutes. If you are practicing iRest and no longer feel comfortable with your legs elevated, mindfully push yourself away from the chair and continue your practice with the legs on the floor.

Enjoy.

**Fig. 1**



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Extracted from *Pathways to a Centered Body: Gentle Yoga Therapy for Core Stability, Healing Back Pain, and Moving with Ease*, by Donna Farhi and Leila Stuart. As an iRest<sup>®</sup> subscriber you can receive a 50% discount on a digital copy of this book when you buy a hard copy from: [www.embodiedwisdom.pub/pcb-ir](http://www.embodiedwisdom.pub/pcb-ir) (Please feel free to make copies of this pdf for your students or clients.)