



Yoga
For A Healthy Lifestyle



TRAINING GUIDE

***Say Goodbye to Ill- Health
& Re-model your *Lifestyle with Yoga*
Tips and Techniques!!!***

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Introduction

It is only you, yourself who can liberate yourself from sorrow and dejection!

Yoga is an ancient form of exercise which was evolved thousands of years back in the Indian continent and is being practiced continuously since then. Yoga is about exercises and the power of meditation to heal a human mind, body, and soul. It brings a person in good shape and helps him to rid of diseases and inabilities. Meditation leads to Relaxation of mind and body.

Through this book, we have tried to bring to front the important principles, norms, and rules of practicing Yoga. It is necessary to note that “Yoga is not just about exercises and asanas.” In fact, it is much more beyond that which you will know reading this guide. The origins of Yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions, but today Yoga is practiced worldwide. It is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India and is now practiced in various forms globally.

This covers the vast and immense subject of Yoga and its historical roots- the source and origin of it all. Reason - it is mandatory to know the history of things which we are planning to practice or implement in our daily lives. It also deals with the Science of Yoga which defines it and the spirit of Yoga which is extremely powerful for our Physical and Mental Health, our self-realization powers which define us as a whole – a universal power.

People mistakenly believe that Yoga is a form of exercise that includes stretching and folding of body parts but the truth is that Yoga is a way of life or an Art of living through the mental, spiritual and physical path. This book will also unfold various myths about Yoga, one of which is stated above. It's all about establishing a powerful connection between your mind and body using various types of Yoga. It entails various body postures when it comes to asanas and physical exercises. And with the involvement of physical body, it becomes significant to take utmost care while performing these asanas. Hence, we have also brought a detailed explanation and description of these Yoga postures, along with their Do's and Dont's, especially for you.

Well, as stated above, Yoga is incomplete without meditation. It helps us to develop a bond with our inner-self and establish a connection with God using the spiritual path. Using this training, you will most definitely learn the path leading to the supreme knowledge and eternal bliss by uniting your inner-self with the universal self. It also covers the types of meditations and its health benefits.

Yoga is also effective in curing various common illnesses that people face in daily lives. With the expansion of cities and countries, our daily lives have become quite busy, dull and over-occupied. There is no liveliness and this commonly is leading to

depression and loneliness among all the age-groups, including the teenagers. Practicing Yoga regularly kills depression and other mental sicknesses. It reduces anxiety and provides a healthy work-life balance by providing different therapies for each one of the illnesses as covered in our Exclusive training.

So, get started and read all that can change you for your better!!!



Chapter 1

What is Yoga and what are
its Historical Roots?



1.1 What is Yoga?

There are several questions bloating around Yoga often. What is it exactly? A religion, an exercise form, a philosophy...what?

Well, Yoga is derived from Sanskrit word 'Yuj' which means the union of the individual consciousness or soul with the Universal Consciousness or Spirit. The literal meaning of "Yoga" is Union. Union means it pulls you out in the ultimate reality, where individual demonstrations of life are surface bubbles in the process of creation. It is a complete path in itself, nothing less.

The word Yoga is something that brings you out into the reality. The reality very simple, very unique and very impressive – understanding the fact that all the creatures have emerged from the same soil, same earth, same level. Understanding that it is just one earth, the same earth for all of us! The union of the individual consciousness or soul with the Universal Consciousness or Spirit is Yoga. It is the emotional integration and spiritual elevation with a touch of a mystic element, which gives you a glimpse of something beyond all imagination.

Yoga is a 5000-year old Indian body of knowledge. It is primarily a spiritual discipline of uniting your little ego-self with the divine self, the infinite spirit, the superpower, the God. People confuse Yoga with 'Hatha Yoga' which is a system of bodily postures. But it is not! Instead, Yoga focuses on self-realization and synchronizing the human consciousness with the divine consciousness.

Yoga is a combination of several forms of disciplines and practices which were originated in ancient India. These disciplines are of physical, mental and spiritual forms.

- **Yoga is a Union of Mind, Body, and Soul**

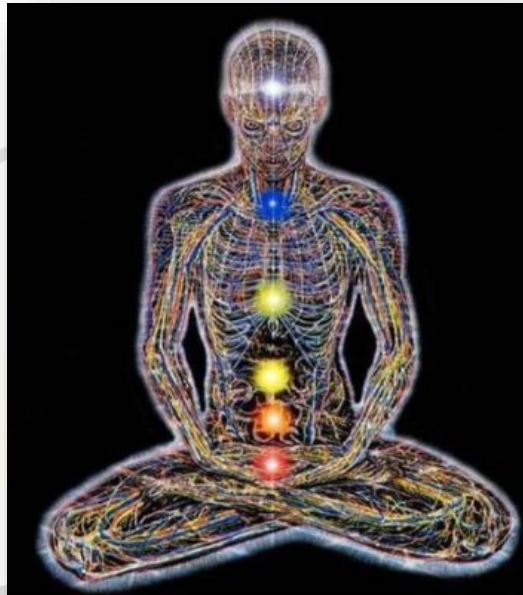
Yoga refers to a Union as a philosophy or a concept that you imbibe. It is a union of your body with your mind, of your inner self, or ego-self with the universal self. It means uniting your individual awareness, your soul with the Universal awareness or the infinite spirit. It is a concept to understand that all creatures are evolved from the same planet, the Earth. May it be a human body, or a dog, or a tree, everything has popped up from the same Earth. It is to believe in the feeling of oneness that is ultimately connected to the omnipotent power, the God.

- **Yoga is an Art and a Science**

Yoga is both an Art and a Science. It is an Art because it needs to be practiced with great intuition and sensitivity to get immediate and permanent results, failing which it will only get you superficial peace and temporary healing. Yoga is a Science because it involves the study and practice of controlling the body and the mind, referred to as Meditation. It also involves the healing of body as

our body is a part of the human nature and thus, it should always be kept fit in order to not to become an obstruction in our spiritual focuses and efforts.

- **Yoga works with the energy of the body**



Yoga primarily deals and works with the energy of our own body. Thus, it is very important to keep both our body and mind fit. Body, because it is physically involved in healing our lives and Mind because if our mind is not fit, active and at peace, there will be no positive energies emerging from our minds. Yoga deals with 'pranayama' or energy-control. 'Prana' means 'breath'. Yoga teaches breath-control, to emphasize a control over mind and attain a control over the higher state of awareness.

- **Yoga is Self-Realization Fellowship**

As per the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu Scripture in Sanskrit, "Yoga is the journey of the self, through the self, to the self."

Yoga is a spiritual science of self-realization. It is the control of the activities, thoughts, and feelings of mind. It has the power to keep your mind and inner complainers in control thus, helping a person to experience peace and attain self-realization. Yoga also helps to build self-confidence and to feel empowered. It ignites you and makes you believe in yourself that you are bound to do anything which you have ever dreamt of or desired of. It teaches you to see a strong, confident, compassionate version of your own-self and helps you find inner peace and serenity.

- **Yoga denotes Physical and Spiritual Well-being of oneself**

Everybody is well aware of the fact that Yoga is about “asanas” and “pranayama” which are two aspects of Yoga which have become popular for their practical value. Your physical body is a reflection of who you are inside. Yoga exercises your body holistically and caters all aspects of your physical, social and psychological needs. You can improve your health while boosting your energy levels and vitality by practicing Yoga. The pranayamas not only tone your muscles and postures, but it also helps to attain a strong and lean body. It improves concentration levels and your power to focus.



Apart from the above physical benefits, Yoga by itself is a concept that is much deeper. It transforms you a person that is a spiritual personality on the whole. Your spiritual body is your connection to energy. And it is important for everyone to explore what they believe in their own sense of meaning and purpose. The path to spiritual wellness involves meditation, and other spiritual practices to establish a connection with the higher and the divine power. Yoga helps in to inculcate this feeling.

- **Yoga is a Stress Buster**



Today in this fast pacing world, 9 out of 10 people are dealing with the problem of stress – physical, mental or emotional, which wears on their health. Stress is something which is not immediately visible but eventually takes a tremendous toll on your health. The main cause of stress is our needs and desires which are not met due to some reason or the other. And in such cases, a daily routine of exercises, breathing and meditation can create wonders for you to reduce the stress levels in your body and bring you into a state of stillness. It clears your mind and makes you feel relaxed and peaceful.

True to its name, Yoga which means to “unite” brings together your body, mind, and soul to a state of oneness. This is very helpful when you are in the state of extreme anxiety, stress or any kind of a pressure. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines that may help you achieve peacefulness of body and mind. This can help you relax and manage stress and anxiety.

1.2 Historical Roots of Yoga

In the hierarchy of Vedic knowledge, there are four Vedas - *Rigveda*, *Samveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*. These are followed by four *upvedas* or sub-vedas – *Ayurveda*, *Arthaveda*, *Dhanurveda*, and *Gandharvaveda*. Further down the line are six *upangas* or components – *Shiksha*, *Kalpa*, *Vyakarana*, *Nirukta*, *Chandas*, and *Jyotisha*. These are further classified into six sub-components – *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sankhya*, *Mimansa*, *Vedanta*, and *Yoga*.



Being widely considered as an ‘immortal cultural outcome’ of Indus Saraswati Valley civilization – dating back to 2700 B.C., Yoga has proved itself catering to both material and spiritual upliftment of humanity. The practice of Yoga is believed to have started with the very dawn of civilization. The science of Yoga has its origin thousands of years ago, long before the first religions or belief systems were born. In the yogic lore, Shiva is seen as the first yogi or Adiyogi, and the first Guru or Adi Guru.

Thousands of years ago, on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, Adiyogi, or Shiva, poured his profound knowledge into the legendary Saptarishis or "seven sages". The sages carried this powerful yogic science to different parts of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and South America. Interestingly, modern scholars have noted and marvelled at the close parallels found between ancient cultures across the globe. However, it was in India that the yogic system found its fullest expression. Agastya, the Saptarishi who travelled across the Indian subcontinent, crafted this culture around a core yogic way of life.

Though Yoga was being practiced in the pre-Vedic period, many great Sages have systematized and codified the then existing practices of Yoga, its meaning, and its related knowledge through their Yoga Sutras. Many Sages and Yoga Masters contributed greatly to the preservation and development of the field through their well-documented practices and literature.

The main sources, from which we get the information about Yoga practices and the related literature during this period, are available in Vedas (4), Upanishads(108), Smritis, teachings of Buddhism, Jainism, Panini, Epics (2), Puranas (18) and many other such ‘Puranas’.

The development of Yoga can be traced back to over 5,000 years ago, but some researchers think that yoga may be up to 10,000 years old. Yoga's long rich history can be divided into four main periods of innovation, practice, and development: **Pre-Classical Yoga, Classical Yoga, Post-Classical Yoga and Modern Yoga.**

- **Pre-Classical Yoga**

As stated above, the beginnings of Yoga were developed by the Indus-Saraswati civilization in Northern India over 5,000 years ago. The word Yoga was first mentioned in the oldest sacred texts, the Rig Veda. The Vedas were a collection of texts containing songs, mantras, and rituals to be used by Brahmins, the Vedic priests. Yoga was slowly refined and developed by the Brahmins and Rishis (mystic seers) who documented their practices and beliefs in the Upanishads, a huge work containing over 200 scriptures. The most renowned of the Yogic scriptures is the Bhagavad-Gita, composed around 500 B.C.E. The Upanishads took the idea of ritual sacrifice from the Vedas and internalized it, teaching the sacrifice of the ego through self-knowledge, action (karma yoga) and wisdom (jnana yoga).



- **Classical Yoga**

In the pre-classical stage, Yoga was a mishmash of various ideas, beliefs, and techniques that often conflicted and contradicted each other. The Classical period is defined by Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras, the first systematic presentation of Yoga. Written in the second century, this text describes the path of Raja Yoga, often called "Classical Yoga". Patanjali organized the practice of Yoga into an "eight-limbed path" containing the steps and stages towards obtaining Samadhi or enlightenment.



- **Post-Classical Yoga**

A few centuries after Patanjali, the Yoga masters created a system of practices designed to rejuvenate the body and prolong life. They rejected the teachings of the ancient Vedas and embraced the physical body as the means to achieve enlightenment. They developed Tantra Yoga, with radical techniques to cleanse the body and mind to break the knots that bind us to our physical existence. This exploration of these physical-spiritual connections and body-centered practices led to the creation of what we primarily think of yoga in the West: Hatha Yoga.



- **Modern Yoga**

The period between 1700 - 1900 A.D. is considered as the Modern period in which the great Yogacharyas- Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Paramhansa Yogananda, Vivekananda etc. have contributed for the development of Raja Yoga. This was the period when Vedanta, Bhakti yoga,

Nathayoga or Hatha-yoga flourished. The Shadanga-yoga of Gorakshashatakam, Chaturanga-yoga of Hathayogapradipika, Saptanga-yoga of Gheranda Samhita, were the main tenants of Hatha-yoga.



In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the sages and the Yoga masters began to travel to the West, attracting attention and followers. In the 1920s and 30s, Hatha Yoga was strongly promoted in India with the work of T. Krishnamacharya, Swami Sivananda and other yogis practicing Hatha Yoga. Krishnamacharya opened the first Hatha Yoga School in Mysore in 1924 and in 1936 Sivananda founded the Divine Life Society on the banks of the holy Ganges River. Krishnamacharya produced three students that would continue his legacy and increase the popularity of Hatha Yoga: B.K.S. Iyengar, T.K.V. Desikachar, and Pattabhi Jois. Sivananda was a prolific author, writing over 200 books on yoga, and established nine ashrams and numerous yoga centers located around the world.

The importation of Yoga to the West still continued at a trickle until Indra Devi inaugurated her Yoga studio in Hollywood in 1947. Since then, many more western and Indian teachers have become pioneers, popularizing hatha yoga and gaining millions of followers. Hatha Yoga now has many different schools or styles, all emphasizing the many different aspects of the practice.

Now in the contemporary times, everybody has conviction about Yoga practices towards the preservation, maintenance, and promotion of health. Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of great personalities like Swami Shivananda, Shri T.Krishnamacharya, Swami Kuvalayananda, Shri Yogendara, Swami Rama, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Rajanish, Pattabhi Jois, BKS. Iyengar, Swami Satyananda Sarasvati and the like.

Conclusion

However, the past few decades have seen Yoga going through a complete transformation. From being frowned upon to being hailed as one of the best natural therapies out there, Yoga has come a long way. The barriers of caste, creed and social status have been uprooted from Yoga to bring it to every home. The benefits of Yoga have not gone unnoticed in the International community and the United Nations has passed a resolution to celebrate June 21st as the International Yoga Day. And this is a great achievement to be noted!!!



Chapter 2

The Science and Spirit of Yoga



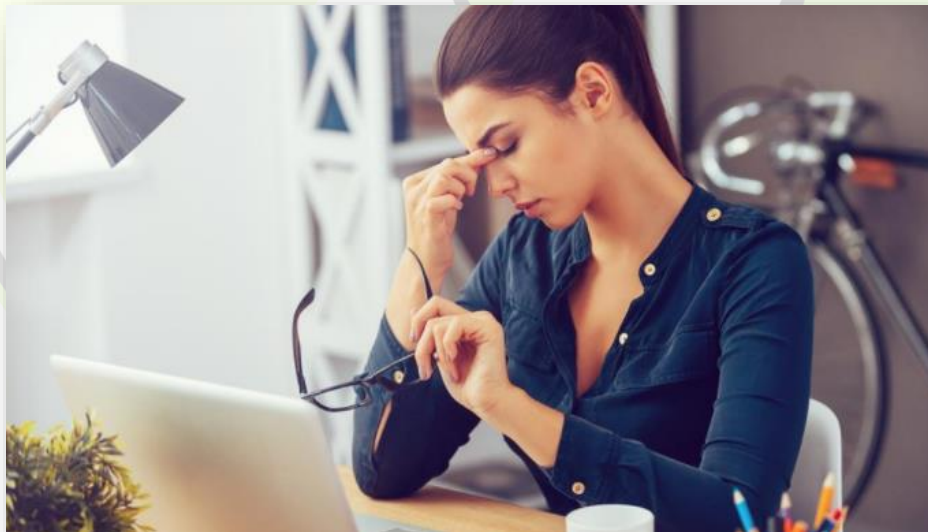
2.1 Science of Yoga

Yoga is a spiritual discipline dating back to some 5000 years in the history of Indian philosophy, its purpose, mainly to unleash spiritual and mental powers of an individual. However, in recent times Yoga has been extremely popular in the context of fighting stress, anxiety, and depression in these times of industrialization and our fast pacing lifestyles.

Yoga is used in medical practices to treat conditions such as multiple sclerosis, arthritis, and others. Many recent studies show the amazing effects Yoga has on the brain, central nervous system, and the immune system. Yoga is also understood to be a body of knowledge handed down through millennia from Guru to Chela. This has been gained through intense, systematic, introverted investigation into the workings of the human mind in search for the sense of existence.

2.1.1 Science behind Yoga and Stress

Stress has become a part of life and a way of living a life. It has completely blended into our lifestyles and our blood. Waking up to a morning full of emails, reminders and phone calls to ending your day, with reverting back to emails from your bosses or colleagues, our days have been full of stress and anxiety. In such situations, it becomes very important for a human being to find out some time to relax and heal their body and soul.



In recent times, Yoga has been extremely popular in the context of fighting stress, anxiety, and depression in these times of industrialization and our super-fast lifestyles. The neuroscience behind Yoga can help explain why regular Yoga is so effective in reducing stress and creating balance in the body. It can also help you deepen your Yoga practice and increase focus on elements that you might otherwise overlook. The stress response and 'relaxing' signals travel through the body along a

particular route and parts of this route have little 'switches' which we can physically manipulate to turn the signals on or off.

Apart from the spiritual aspects, the physiological benefits acquired from Yoga have recently had radical scientific understandings behind its workings. It is also moderate the surge and the production of chemicals in the body that affects us mentally, physically as well as psychosomatically. So, let's understand the science behind yoga that makes it so useful!

1. Reduces Stress Hormones

When our body gets severely stressed, it secretes a hormone called **cortisol** which keeps us alert in critical situations. But in the long run, it also disturbs the body functioning. Yoga reduces the stress level of a person, thus moderating the production of the cortisol hormone and thereby keeping the individual calm.

2. Secretes Antioxidant Enzymes

Repeated exposure to environmental pollutants and metabolic by-products result in the formation of free radicals, which contribute to various diseases including cancer and expedite the aging process. To counteract free radicals, the human body has a powerful internal defense system in the form of antioxidant enzymes. The levels of antioxidant enzymes were found to be significantly higher in people practicing yoga, thus enhancing the defense against free radical damage.

3. Stimulates Parasympathetic Nervous System

The parasympathetic nervous system is one of three divisions of the autonomic nervous system which conserves the energy by slowing the heart rate and increasing the intestinal and gland activity. It also relaxes the sphincter muscles in the gastrointestinal tract.



Yoga stimulates this parasympathetic nervous system, which calms us down and restores balance after a major stress is over. When the parasympathetic nervous system switches on, blood is directed toward endocrine glands, digestive organs, and other body organs, thus reducing the heart-beat rate and lowering the blood pressure.

4. Improves Immunity

This is additional to the fact that Yoga reduces cortisol hormone. Too much of cortisol can dampen the effectiveness of the immune system by immobilizing our defense system in the body (WBC). Yoga moderates the production of cortisol, thus boosting immunity.

5. Cures Addiction

Dopamine, a chemical in the brain that gives contentment during a high on one's drug of choice is generated naturally by doing Yoga. Thus, the craving for that level of contentment from addiction is no longer manifested. Yoga can give you the same level of dopamine high or contentment, thus cutting out the craving for drug addiction.

6. Enlarges the Brain



It has been discovered that people practicing Yoga have more brain cells than the non-practitioners. It was found that with more hours of practice per week, certain areas of the brain were more enlarged – a finding that truly explains that Yoga is a contributing factor to the bigger brain size. People practicing Yoga have larger brain volume in the regions that contain the mental mapping of our body, involved in directing attention, critical to dampening stress, and areas key to our concept of the self.

7. Helps to Stay in the Present

Yoga makes one attentive to the present moment and gives more awareness towards negative thoughts. It provides you the ability to let go of the negativity inside your brain and mind and lets you focus on self-preservation. Yoga helps you to dissolve the past happenings which bother or worry you in any way and helps you to completely focus on your present and the current happenings.

It is important to remember that Yoga has no governing body. There's no hierarchy of officials or organizations meant to ensure purity and adherence to agreed-upon sets of facts and poses, rules and procedures, outcomes and benefits. It's not like a religion or modern medicine, where rigorous schooling, licensing, and boards seek to produce a high degree of conformity. Instead, it's a free-for-all—and always has been.

The art and science of Yoga have infinite possibilities for providing answers to most health problems troubling modern humankind. However, we often misunderstand this science and want it to be a miracle pill. A pill that we take only once, and want all the problems to vanish into thin air! Yoga is a holistic science and must be learned

and practiced with a holistic view. Yoga gives frames for the new understanding and new approach to the perception of the human health.

2.2 Spirit of Yoga – The Soul

Yoga is a holistic technology that balances mind, spirit, and body and is central to Indian health practice. Regular practice of Yoga helps to restore balance by helping to strengthen our body, calm our mind, regain our focus and improve self-confidence. It is a secret to better health and a greater sense of happiness.



Along with the series of simple, yet effective yoga postures and breathing techniques, a greater emphasis is placed on the inner experience of meditation, for the well-being of the mind and other hidden elements of human existence. We believe when one is in harmony within; the journey through life becomes calmer, happier and more fulfilled. The wisdom and techniques of Yoga are taught in a pure, joyful and thorough manner. The Yoga therapy restores balance by helping to strengthen our body, calm our mind, regain our focus and improve self- confidence.

2.2.1 What is the Soul?



The soul is the part of an individual which is treated as an immortal spirit. In Yoga, it is believed that every individual- a person, has a physical self and a soul. There are two types of a soul – the individual soul and the universal soul, or super soul.

A Soul is immortal, unchanging and eternal. It is the most real part of an individual and is absolutely divine. Within the practice of Yoga, individual aims to discipline the body and ego in order to connect the individual soul with the supreme soul, or Divine, thereby realizing his true Self. In Yoga philosophy, this is accomplished through meditation, self-study, and self-discipline throughout one's practice.

Yoga philosophy begins with the spirit. Getting in touch with your spirit is the true goal of Yoga. It occurs naturally when your mind quiets and you are able to access the inner wisdom that emerges from the deepest aspect of your being. One way to connect with your soul is by consciously asking yourself questions that go to the heart of the human experience. There are three key questions that help shift your internal reference point from ego to spirit:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I want?
3. How can I serve?

Whether or not you are aware of it, these questions are directing your choices in life. Regularly bringing your current answers to conscious awareness enables you to be alert to the opportunities that resonate with the needs of your soul.



From the perspective of Yoga, answering the first question “Who am I?” provides a few of the identity points that represent some aspect of you but not the ultimate essence of who you are. Answering the second question “What do I want?” takes you deeper. When you know what a person desires, you know the essence of that person. And the same goes for you, yourself – If you know what you desire, you know the essence of your inner-self. As you become increasingly conscious of your identity and your desires, ask yourself the third soul question, “How can I serve?” As your sense of self expands, your compassion proportionately increases and you naturally find yourself caring about how your choices influence those around you.

The true purpose of Yoga is to discover that aspect of your being that can never be lost. Your job may change, your relationships may change, your body may change, your beliefs may change, your desires may change, your ideas about your role in the world may change, but the essence of who you are is the continuity of awareness that has no beginning or end. Your thoughts, beliefs, expectations, goals, and experiences may come and go, but the one who is having the experiences—the experiencer—remains constant.

As you start practicing Yoga, you may find your sense of identity changing, reflecting a more expanded view of yourself. You may find your desires becoming less personal. As your concept of inner-self expands, your concern about others may simultaneously increase. You may discover a deepening aspiration to make a contribution to your community and your world. This expansion of self-awareness is the essence of Yoga.

2.2.2 What is the Soul Body and how it works?

There are different types of Yoga, which will be discussed in Chapter 5 in detail. One of the Yoga types is Kundalini Yoga, where it is taught that a human being is a composition of 10 human bodies, not one. Out of these 10 bodies, the first body is

called the **Soul Body**, which is your “inner-self”. It is the voice that speaks to you and guides you on the path of your true purpose, which feels in harmony with all life.



In the Yogic tradition, the soul is an actual “thing” and this soul is the spirit of Yoga. While it is inter-dimensional, it has weight in this world, just less than an ounce. When a person passes away, the Soul Body is encased in the Subtle Body (which records all your deeds, words, actions) and they travel onward to the next level of your incarnation. Once the Soul Body has “left” the physical body, the weight is less. Hence, the 1st body, is both completely spiritual and a completely real. **The real issue of the Soul Body is the idea of “head versus heart”**. When the head rules, the head and heart are both wrong; when the heart rules, the head and heart are both right.

When your connection to your Soul Body is weak, it will be harder to find the strength to live your passions and follow your bliss.

The Soul Body is often described as the reason for physical life. The lessons we learn, the “meaning” of why we’re here are all contained within the Soul Body. The other nine bodies are servants of the soul body, ideally creating an environment where the Soul Body can flourish. It is the point and seat of your connectedness with the Universe. Yoga and meditation can work in turn on each of the 10 bodies, and this creates an easier expression for your Soul Body.

- If you have a strong Soul Body, you will feel very creative and even sexually active. Sexual dysfunctions may indicate a weakened Soul Body as well. Opening yourself up to sexual bliss, and being in the flow of the creative energy of the Universe, strengthens the Soul Body.

- When your soul body is strong and powerful, your life can be full of creativity, passion, and purpose. You start loving yourself and living from your heart.
- Keeping your soul body powerful also helps you feel infinitely loved by the Universe and the way it responds to your actions and feelings.
- People generally listen to music and connect with some particular song, sometimes even a specific mantra, which they feel touches their soul and their heart. This not only makes you feel happier but also strengthens your soul body.

Yoga is powerful in attaining all the above, as it works like a magic for all.

Conclusion

Yoga is the fusion of body, mind, and spirit through meditation, breathing and other physical exercises. It is a process of holistic healing which creates a healthy climate in your mind and body. Yoga and meditation has an extremely positive effect on the central nervous system and immune system as well as improving an individual's overall sense of wellbeing.

Put the odds in your favour by listening to your body. It is a small change that can lead to a big shift in your life. The best way to start the practice of listening is to do Yoga. Start small with just a few poses, and make sure you breathe.

Chapter 3

How is Yoga Beneficial for your Health?



Workout freaks come and go, but virtually no other exercise program is as enduring as Yoga. Yoga does more than burn calories and tone muscles. It's a total mind-body workout that combines strengthening and stretching poses with deep breathing and meditation or relaxation.

Every Yoga asana (pose) has a different name and includes standing postures, seated twists, backbends, arm balances, inversions, and core holds. The downward facing dog, for example, is in itself said to calm the brain, energize the body, improve digestion, strengthen arms and legs and be therapeutic for high blood pressure. Whilst these benefits come as a given with most postures, the practice of yoga as a whole provides many more benefits than you might think!

3.1 Benefits of Practicing Yoga

Through this guide, we have been touting Yoga's mental, spiritual and physical powers. So, fortunately, you don't have to be an expert to reap the benefits – adding just a few quick exercises to your daily routine can help you improve your health, stay fit and be at peace.

3.1.1 How does Yoga benefit your Mental and Spiritual Health?

1. Gives you inner strength

As quoted by a very famous personality Sri Sri Ravi Shankar -

“When you have inner peace, then you automatically succeed in what you do. The more silent you are from inside, the more powerful your thoughts and actions become.”

Lately, we have been so much caught up in the fast pacing modern lifestyle that we have distanced ourselves from nature and all the other positive energies around us. And this takes a huge toll on our mind. It is the need of the hour to relieve our mind which has been full of negativity. And nothing can cure this problem but Yoga and Meditation. Yoga is a soothing strategy invented to help those who suffer, by including special techniques for healing. It calms our mind and helps us to find enlightenment. Meditation is also one of the ways to take deep rest and be vigilant at the same time. It helps us to connect with our inner-self and attain peace.

Yoga and meditation is an art that one must learn with precision to make the strategy work proper and enjoy healing that leads to inner peace. Once the person practices with the goal in mind to heal, the inner peace follows.

2. Eases your emotional pain

Yoga helps you to ease your mental and emotional pain caused due to various reasons like some hardships made in life, detachment with any near or dear

one, the death of somebody close to you or any other emotional sensation which has made you weak and broken you deep inside.



Yoga releases emotional blockages by removing the emotional toxicity stored in your body. Just as changing thought patterns can influence the body, changing the position of your body can influence the mind and facilitate emotional release. Yoga poses, breathing practices, and meditation release the construction and free the flow of the vital life-force energy.

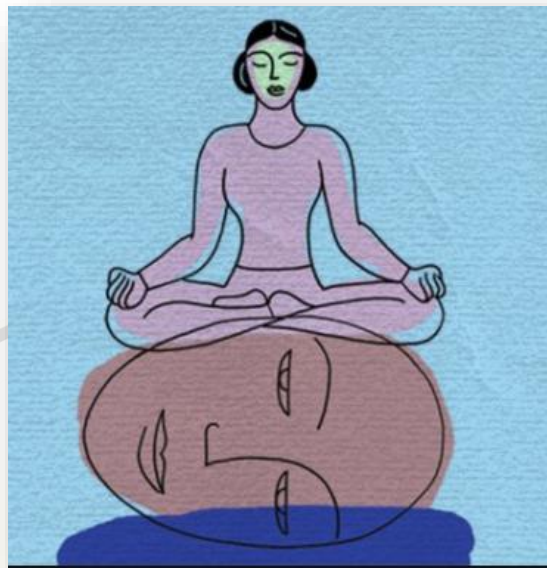
3. Builds self-confidence and increases self-esteem

Nobody can deny the fact that true confidence emerges from within. Without self-confidence, we lack the initiative to perform extraordinary things for ourselves. And, we let fear take over and conquer us.

The acknowledgment of one's true self and what makes us each unique is what leads to confidence, and one great way to get more in tune with the real you, is through the practice of Yoga. It boosts a person's self-confidence, makes him feel stronger, capable and graceful within his body thereby building a stronger self-esteem. Practicing Yoga regularly is ideal and helpful to reap the inner self-confidence and nurture self-esteem.

4. Gives you peace of mind

Yoga is ideal to squash and put the fluctuations of the mind to rest. It helps you to develop an intimacy with your body and your thoughts, with what pulls you out of a sense of peace and contentment. Yoga slows down the mental loops of frustration, regret, anger, fear, and desire that can cause stress. If you learn to quiet your mind, you'll be likely to live longer and healthier thus minimizing the risks of high blood pressures, cardiac arrest and other severe health problems.



5. Sharpens your focus

There is a very important aspect of Yoga - focussing on your present and current state. The inability to focus takes a toll on your performance, and hence, your sense of well-being.

Exhaustion, anxiety, stress, lack of interest and conflicting demands are commonly touted reasons for lacking focus. However, this lacking predominantly originates from a scattered and restless mind.

Regular Yoga practice improves coordination, reaction time, memory, and even IQ scores. People who practice Yoga and meditation regularly demonstrate the ability to solve problems, acquire and recall information better when compared to non-practitioners of Yoga. The reason is very simple! Yoga practitioners are less distracted by their inner thoughts and mind-rolling which plays over and over like an endless tape loop.



6. Makes you happier

Yoga triggers the release of the essential hormone **oxytocin**, which floods your body with feelings of happiness and well-being. Yoga also reduces stress by regulating the level of the hormone cortisol, which ultimately leads to a happier version of you. Stress is inversely proportional to Happiness, that is, the lower are the stress levels, higher are the chances of you being happy.

7. Gives you deep sleep

Next to food, sleep is a most important element which helps you to stay fit and fine. A person who is sleep deprived or insomniac is often more prone to both physical and mental problems. When we sleep our body repairs on a cellular level and removes toxins. It is, therefore, necessary to get at least six to eight hours of good sleep daily. If not, it may lead to premature aging and leave your mind confused and muddled.



If you are unable to sleep enough, Yoga can help because sleep is another by-product of Yoga. Practicing Yoga regularly cures several ailments, including insomnia. Yoga helps unwind at the end of the day and gives better sleep at night. There are special Yoga exercises which can be practiced for a sound sleep like standing forward bend, cat stretch, and butterfly pose, etc.

Apart from the ones listed above, Yoga also has great benefits for your physical health and fitness. Few of them are mentioned below:

3.1.2 How does Yoga benefit your Physical Health?

1. Perfects your body posture

Our modern lives conspire against good postures. We spend 8-10 hours of our day sitting in the office, staring at our computer screens and later on slouching on our couches once we reach home. Getting a good body posture, a perfectly aligned spine can be accomplished by practicing Yoga. It is not an activity to be done once a week, or fortnight or monthly too in some cases. Instead, it needs to be done regularly. If you train your body to maintain the normal spinal curves and keep your posture vertical and spacious when you're standing or sitting upright, you're likely to feel better all over. And this can be achieved with the power of Yoga.



2. Builds muscle strength

Strong muscles not only make you look physically fit but also protect you from problems like arthritis and back pain, which has become a common issue among the people with age group of 35 years and above. If you build your strength with Yoga, it will help prevent falls at your old age. You can increase muscle tone and even muscle size with Yoga – Yes, that's absolutely true. Yoga tones muscles all over your body, in balance with each other, unlike the weight training exercises which typically isolate and flex one muscle or muscle group at a time. It also increases muscle endurance because you typically hold any given pose for a period of time and repeat it several times during a Yoga workout.



3. Improves flexibility

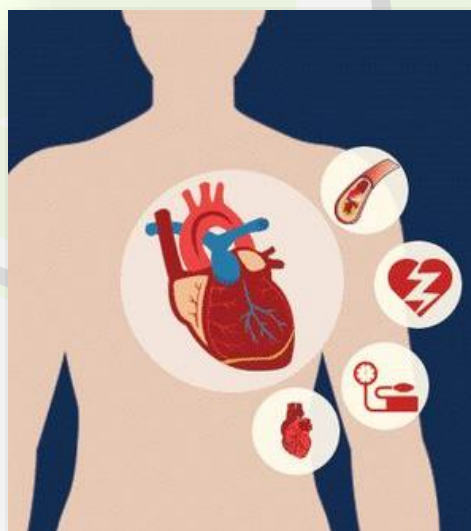
Improved flexibility is one of the most obvious benefits of Yoga. Don't expect that your body will become flexible in one single day of your Yoga session because that's not going to happen. Never! Once you get into daily practice, your body will automatically loosen up and become flexible. There are some common poses marked to increase your flexibility with Yoga. For example - the Big Toe Pose, Bound Angle Pose, Child's Pose, Cow Face Pose, Extended Triangle Pose and even many more. The above are dedicated to helping you lengthen and stretch your muscles in a safe and effective way.

4. Enhances your Blood Flow

Yoga helps you to get your blood flowing. Yoga exercises help in blood circulation, especially in your hands and feet. It channelizes the oxygen to your cells in a uniform and effective manner in order to help them function better. Yoga also boosts levels of hemoglobin and red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the tissues. And it thins the blood by making platelets less sticky and by cutting the level of clot-promoting proteins in the blood. This can lead to a decrease in cardiac arrests and heart strokes since blood clots are often the cause of these killers.

5. Helps in Cardio Workout

Yoga also improves cardiovascular conditioning. It lowers the resting heart rate, increases endurance, and can improve your maximum uptake of oxygen during exercise. The Cardio Yoga workout is great for burning calories at a much higher rate than you would with a more traditional format of other physical exercises. The cardiovascular intervals are good for getting the heart pumping and you may even be able to get of sweat going if you stay focused and push yourself more.



When you regularly get your heart rate into the aerobic range, you lower your risk of heart attacks and can depression. While not all Yoga is aerobic, if you do it vigorously, it can boost your heart rate into the aerobic range. Even the Yoga exercises that don't get your heart rate up that high can improve cardiovascular conditioning.

6. Regulates Blood Pressure

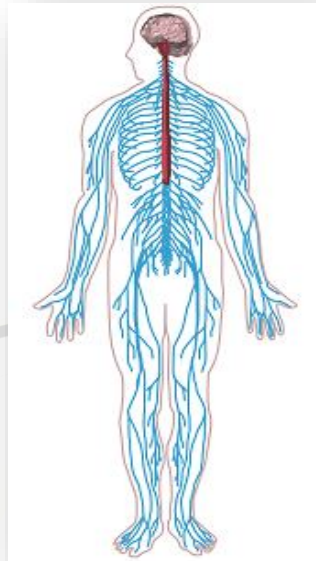
High blood pressure is also called hypertension which is a 'silent killer' as it displays no symptoms. Neither a high nor a low blood pressure is desirable, a balance is essential in the body. People having the problem of high blood pressure can get benefitted by practicing Yoga. It regulates the blood pressure by inducing deep relaxation in the body. The gentle and soothing practice of Yoga asanas settles both mind and body and reduces stress which is a primary cause of hypertension. It gives positive energy to the body and mind and makes you happier, more hopeful in life. In the long run, this helps to lower high blood pressure.

7. Reduces Blood Sugar

Yoga has been found to lower blood sugar in several ways by lowering cortisol and adrenaline levels, encouraging weight loss, and improving sensitivity to the effects of insulin. Practicing Yoga regularly reduces glucagons (which are secreted due to excessive stress) and can also help improve insulin action. Yoga asanas are also believed to increase the blood supply, massage the organs, activate its cells and thereby cause an increase in secretion of insulin; reducing high blood sugar.

8. Maintains Nervous System

Today, all of us are living a life where we often do multi-tasking due to our tight schedules and timelines. This often wreaks havoc on our nervous systems. Restorative Yoga poses have a profound ability to affect our nervous systems in a positive manner. It is a form of discipline that helps in complete relaxation through the practice of various nidras and meditations. It also teaches to relax the system voluntarily. Regular practice of yoga, especially breathing and meditation tends to reinforce the relaxation response.



9. Boosts Immune System

Our immune system is of utmost importance and plays a significant role in keeping us fit and healthy. A fully functional immune system is important for optimum health. Asana and pranayama do improve immune function, but, so far, meditation has the strongest scientific support in this area. It appears to have a beneficial effect on the functioning of the immune system. Yoga is one of the most effective and time-tested natural immunity boosters that we can adopt for a healthier life. It is an ancient art that strengthens the body and also relaxes the mind.

Conclusion

Health is Wealth!!!

You might have read or heard this punch-line quite a number of times in your life, but how many times have you actually made an effort to practice this?

Surely, some of you might have practiced it but not sure if you are doing it regularly. For others who haven't thought about it yet- There is nothing in our life that is more valuable than good health. Without health, there is no happiness, no peace, and no success. Even Western science is starting to provide some concrete clues as to how Yoga works to improve health, heal aches and pains, and keep sickness at bay. A person with bad health cannot enjoy the pleasure of being wealthy. And if you really want to transform your life to make it better, stress-free, heal your aches and pain, do not wait for any tomorrow because there is no tomorrow. What you have is today, and it is your responsibility to make it count. Leverage the power of Yoga and meditation today and get benefitted out of them both.

Chapter 4

How to Establish Mind-Body Connection with Yoga?



Essentially, the entire purpose of Yoga is to unite the body, mind, and soul. According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, “Yoga is a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of Yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation.” Those of us who practice Yoga on a regular basis can attest to its ability to provide mental clarity in conjunction with physical strength. The goal of any human activity is to achieve a state of perfect understanding, clarity, and renewed strength that can be achieved only from a strong mind-body connection. And, the body and the mind are in a state of constant interaction.

There is a unique connection between your mind and body. Your thoughts affect your body and fitness. When you feel stressed or anxious, your body responds to those feelings by increasing your heart rate and increase the level of a hormone cortisol in your body. When you practice strengthening that connection, you can change how your mind affects your body. Yoga primarily focuses on building a connection between your mind and body.

Yoga is a powerful practice that enhances your mind-body integration. Through conscious breathing, movement, and attention to the physical postures, you cultivate a state of body-centered restful awareness. You listen to the signals that your body is sending to you in the present moment and you expand the energy in your body through your attention and intention. It transforms your body into the one that responds with greater strength, vitality, and health.



The science of Yoga does not dictate where the body ends and the mind begins but approaches both as a single, integrated entity. The key is to integrate the two together, to the union, thus the term Yoga. The purpose of Yoga is to create a balance between the mind and body.

4.1 How to stabilize your Mind and improve mental health?

Through our product, we have brought you some simple ways to stabilize your mind, be optimistic and thus improve your health:



1. Try to reflect and manifest your emotions and understand the causes that trigger negativity within you.
2. Sort out the causes leading to such emotions and negative thoughts.
3. Try to express your feelings in a harmonious way and make changes to your lifestyle to improve your mental health.
4. Live a balanced, joyous and an amiable life.
5. Focus on the positive things around you and the people who are accountable for those positive things around you.
6. Free yourself. Laugh freely, and spend more time with the people in your life that matter most. That's freedom and that's freeing yourself.
7. Let go of the events, things or people in your life that pressurize or stress you.

8. Create a place of joy at home and your workplace both.
9. Calm your mind and body and talk to yourself while you are in a good or a bad mood. It will help you to vocalize your thoughts to yourself and to others, if needed.
10. Exercise your brain just like you exercise your physical body using mental exercises.
11. Practice patience! Whether it is Yoga or anything else in life, you need to be patient. Things do not take turn in a single day, you need to wait, watch and work. All the three need patience.

4.2 How to strengthen your mind-body connection?

There are a few ways which you need to implement in your daily lifestyle, if you are keen to strengthen the bonds and connections between your mind and body:



1. Start your practice with meditation

Meditating is very much beneficial to nourish the bonds between your mind and body. Hence, it is always advised to start your Yoga practice with a short meditation. You can just start with a 10-minute meditation before you actually initiate your session for the day.

During this quick meditation, you should be diverting your mind off work and other day-to-day activities of the day. You need to focus on being calm, composed and happy throughout the day, no matter how you are planning to spend it. Your focus should also be directed to your breathing exercises and the mantra that you have created for yourself. This will be helpful to clear your mind completely.

2. Set a valid goal for this practice

This is important and crucial for your Yoga practice. And also necessary to allow Yoga to improve your mind and body connection and strengthen it. As you start your practice for the day with meditation, you can keep this goal or intention in your mind as it will help you focus on a particular virtue for which you have opted Yoga. This virtue can be anything like patience, love, positivity, awareness, etc. Even while you practice each of the Yoga poses, try to embody this intention and think about it. You may even repeat and enchant it softly while you are practicing Yoga during your session. Repeating this in your mind will not let you deviate from your focus, instead help you attain it.

3. Breathe while you practice each Yoga Pose

Breathing is very important for an effective Yoga practice, especially when you are trying to strengthen the connection between your body and mind. Focus on your breath and pay attention to it during your practice. This forced focus can help strengthen the mind-body connection. Try to learn easy and quick breathing techniques so that you can implement them while you practice meditation and other Yoga poses.



4. End your Yoga session with Corpse Pose

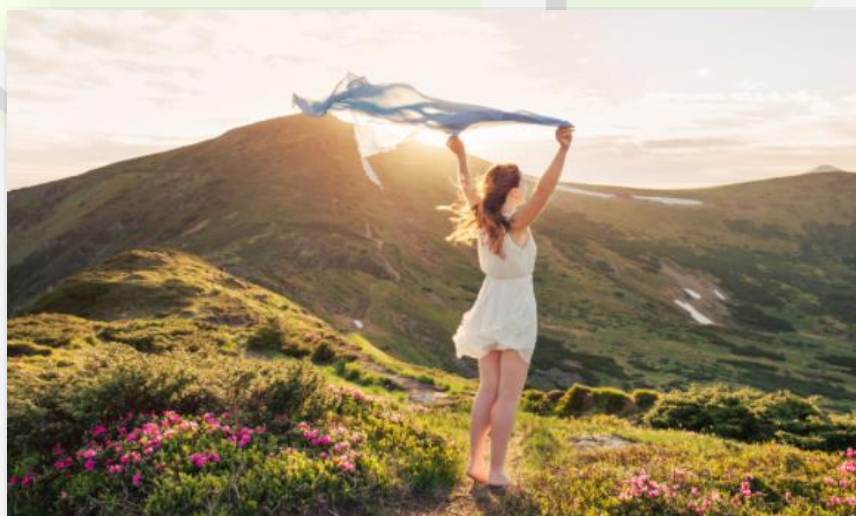
Mostly, all the Yoga sessions end with the Corpse pose, also known as, Savasana. It is easy to perform and focuses on the mind-body connection as it aims at quieting and focussing your mind. While you lie down on the floor during practicing this pose, you will be instructed to focus on your intention for the day and the steps that you are going to take to achieve that after stepping out from the session.



4.3 Other Tips to Nourish the Duo [Mind and Body]

Apart from the practices mentioned above to build a positive connection between your mind and body; we have brought some important tips for you to strengthen this bond.

1. Spend some time outside



Stepping outside, spending some time with nature and giving your mind a much-needed rest is really important and beneficial for your health. Taking a walk in a quiet and peaceful area with trees or plants around, may be in a quiet garden or park, helps to rejuvenate mind and enhances focus. You can also choose to practice your Yoga sessions outdoors in such places. This would not only sharpen your focus but will also help in meditation.

2. Take active breaks at work

Having a busy and stressed lifestyle leaves us in boredom. Too much workload in our workplaces, the stress attached to it, commuting our ways back to home, everything tests our mind-body connection regularly, almost daily. Taking an active break at work can help avoid this.

Just get up from your desk at your workplace and do some light movement or exercise like rotating your neck in clockwise and anti-clockwise direction consecutively, or moving your wrists in a similar fashion, or even perform some Yoga poses. You can even opt to go for a walk in your office premises if allowed. Such kind of breaks can help you refocus and improve concentration in your office work without losing your mind and body connection.

3. Put down your thoughts and feelings on paper



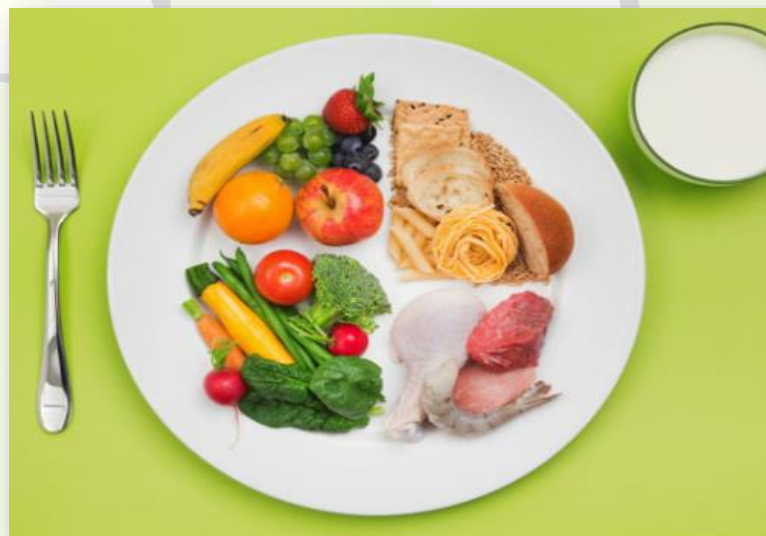
Jotting down thoughts on paper is the easiest and the best way to release stress and the emotional toxins. Not only this, it also helps you understand and identify your thoughts and actions by providing deep insight into your mind. Studies and surveys have proven that writing down your feelings on paper is a better way to reduce stress than voicing them out to somebody. Writing daily can enable you to spend some more time with yourself which

in turn will make you feel good about yourself and your surroundings. The more time you spend with yourself, the more you understand yourself, and the more you understand yourself, more are the possibilities of strengthening the bonds with your mind and body.

4. Take enough sleep and rest

Regardless of how much Yoga you practice, and how much asanas you do, if you do not get enough rest and sleep, you will not progress well. It is recommended to get at least 8 hours of sleep daily for adults. With enough sleep, you will have improved memory and enhanced attention span. You will be more energetic throughout the day and be less prone to any kind of irritation. Getting the right amount of sleep every night brings your mind to a state of much-needed rest and allows it to function better. If your mind will function in its best form, then there are good chances of nourishing the bonds between both your mind and the body.

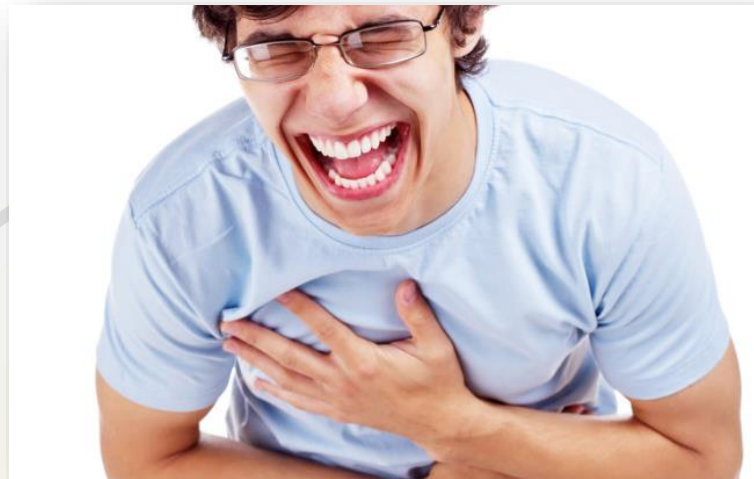
5. Have a healthy and a proper diet plan



The food we eat, not only influences our physical health but also our emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Yoga practices and meditation in itself are very powerful for establishing a connection with your mind and body, but when complemented with healthy food habits and a proper diet plan, it can create wonders. So, the bottom line is, regulation on food is a must for all the people practicing Yoga. It is an essential part of the Yoga practice. You cannot keep eating junk food day and night and claim yourself to be a follower of Yoga. It just cannot happen! So it is a must to regulate your diet and incorporate healthy food habits. Avoid Overeating, follow a strict diet

plan, and say No to Junk food. You can visit online blogs and articles to get further information regarding this.

6. Enjoy a good-belly Laugh at-least once a day



From the scientific perspective, laughter is an elegant mind-body phenomenon that reduces the production of stress hormones and boosts the immune system. Laughing also lowers the blood pressure and increases muscle flexion. It increases the circulation of antibodies in the bloodstream and makes us more resistant to infection. Laughter also triggers the release of **endorphins**, the body's natural feel-good chemicals which promote an overall sense of well-being and even temporarily relieve pain. Hence, it is very important to associate with people or things that make you laugh out loud. If you are missing on such people in your life, then probably you can watch any comic web-series or movies to fill in the gap.

Conclusion

Yoga is an ancient practice credited with taking a holistic approach to total wellbeing, strengthening and fortifying the body while engaging the mind. It positively influences many emotions and feelings like anxiety, stress, self-awareness, anger, ego and many more. Even in the simplest of asanas, Yoga brings together the body and mind through awareness of the movement and the breath, with the mind knowing what the body is doing.

By practicing Yoga, we are strengthening the body through the physical postures. But the teachings of Yoga encourage us to not just simply move the body in space, but to be aware of why we are doing it, and how it makes us feel. This mind-body connection helps us to engage more dynamically in life, with our world and the people around us.

Chapter 5

Different Types of Yoga



Yoga isn't necessarily a 'one-size-fits-all' practice. Many different kinds of Yoga exist and it can be difficult to figure out which particular style is right for you. Most styles of Yoga are based on the same basic Yoga poses (called asanas) however the experience of one style can be radically different than another. No matter what style of Yoga you choose to do, you will likely see improvements in many areas of your health.

5.1 What are the different types of Yoga?

Yoga is abundantly full of varieties. Just as you step in an ice-cream parlor, you see different flavors of ice-creams shelved and arranged beautifully in there, and you want to taste out every flavor that you see, but you can't. Or, even if you do taste them all, you might not like each of those flavors. The reason is simple - you love only certain flavors as your taste buds like only certain tastes and dislike the others. Similarly, with Yoga, you know you have a variety of styles available to learn, practice and follow but not all of those styles might be apt and suitable for your body. So, first, you need to know which Yoga style involves which kind of activities, needs, and advantages. So before you practice, learn about them and know which one is best for you.

1. Hatha Yoga

Hatha is a general category of Yoga that includes mostly all the styles. It is an old system that includes the practice of *asanas* (yoga postures) and *pranayama* (breathing exercises), which help bring peace to the mind and body, preparing the body for deeper spiritual practices such as meditation.



The term Hatha Yoga has been commonly used to describe the practice of asana (postures). The syllable '**ha**' denotes the pranic (vital) force governing

the physical body and '**tha**' denotes the chitta (mental) force thus making Hatha Yoga a catalyst to awaken the two energies that govern our lives. It harmonizes and purifies the body systems and focuses the mind in preparation for more advanced sessions. Hatha is also defined as the gentlest form of Yoga. It is the science of using the body to prepare oneself for the ultimate possibility.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for Beginners, because of its slower pace. Hatha is preferable if you're just starting your Yoga practice.

2. Vinyasa Yoga



Vinyasa, typically pronounced as “Vin-yah-sah” essentially means movement synchronized with breath and is a vigorous Yoga style based on a rapid flow through sun salutations. Vinyasa Yoga is known for its fluid, movement-intensive practice which drives the intention to link breath to movement. If you hate routine and love to test your physical limits, Vinyasa may be just your ‘cup of tea’.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for the intense exercisers who enjoy a faster pace. Runners and endurance athletes are also drawn to Vinyasa Yoga because of the continuous movement involved in it.

3. Ashtanga Yoga



Ashtanga is based on ancient Yoga teachings, but it was popularized and brought to the West eventually. Ashtanga is a rigorous style of Yoga that follows a specific sequence of postures and is similar to Vinyasa Yoga, as each style links every movement to a breath. The difference is that Ashtanga always performs the exact same poses in the exact same order. While practicing Ashtanga Yoga, there is a series – a set of sequence of asanas, always performed in the same order. There are six series in total, increasing in difficulty as you move from the primary to the secondary series and then on to the next. You tend to move on rapidly, flowing from one pose to the next with each inhale and exhale.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for the Type-A folks. So, basically, if you're a perfectionist, you'll like Ashtanga's routine and strict guidelines.

4. Bikram Yoga



Bikram Yoga, named after Bikram Choudhury, is carried out in artificially heated rooms with the temperature maintained up to 105°F (40.6°C), with a humidity of 40%. You can be certain that you will sweat; the room is hot and the Yoga session will challenge you both physically and mentally. This form of hot yoga is meant to flush toxins, manage weight and allow people to move more deeply into poses. Bikram Yoga is a series of 26 basic Yoga postures and 2 breathing exercises, each performed twice.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for people who gravitate towards a set routine. Even the newbies to Yoga might like this form of Yoga due to its predictable sequence of exercises.

5. Iyengar Yoga



Iyengar Yoga, developed and popularized by B.K.S. Iyengar, is a very meticulous style of Yoga, with utmost attention paid to finding the proper alignment in a pose. In this type of Yoga, poses are held much longer than other Yoga forms, in an effort to pay closer attention to the precise musculoskeletal alignment within each asana. Here, utmost attention is paid to finding the proper alignment in a pose. Props like blocks, straps, harnesses, and incline boards are used in Iyengar Yoga to get you more perfectly into positions and have earned its nickname, “furniture yoga.” Appropriate for all ages and abilities, Iyengar Yoga is all about precise alignment and deliberate sequencing.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for people who are detail-oriented, i.e. who pay attention to even the minute details of everything. If you like to geek out about anatomy, movement, and form, you’ll love and prefer Iyengar Yoga.

6. Anusara Yoga



Anusara Yoga is a relative newcomer to the Yoga world founded by John Friend. This form of Yoga is meant to be heartfelt and accepting. Instead of trying to fit everyone into standard cookie-cutter positions, here, the people are guided to express themselves through the poses to their fullest ability. The Anusara style is a new system of hatha that teaches a set of Universal Principles of Alignment that underlie all Yoga postures while encouraging flowing with grace and following your heart. The practice of Anusara is broadly categorized into three parts, known as the Three A's which include Attitude, Alignment, and Action. It seeks to use the physical practice of Yoga to help people open their hearts, experience grace, and let their inner goodness shine through.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for people who are fun-loving, chirpy and know how to find good in everything.

7. Hot Yoga



Hot Yoga is a lot similar to Bikram Yoga and it is practiced in the same kind of a heated room. The only difference is that it is not constrained by the 26-pose Bikram Yoga practice sequence. While the heat will make you feel like you can move deeper into some poses compared to a non-heated class, it can be easy to overstretch, so don't push beyond your capacity. Hot yoga typically leads to profuse sweating.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for hardcore sweat lovers. If you love a tough workout that will leave you drenched, start practicing Hot Yoga.

8. Kundalini Yoga



Brought to the west by Yogi Bhajan, this form of Yoga looks and feels quite different than any other form of Yoga. This is due to its focus on repetitive, enhanced breathing and the movement of energy through the body.

The practice of Kundalini Yoga features constantly moving and invigorating poses. The fluidity of the practice is intended to release the kundalini (serpent) energy in your body. The goal of Kundalini Yoga is to break your internal barriers, releasing the untapped energy residing within you and bringing you a higher level of self-awareness. It is designed to awaken the energy at the base of the spine in order to draw it upward through the body.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for people looking for a spiritual practice and seeking something more than a workout. This is due to its emphasis on the internal aspects of Yoga, including breathing, meditation, and spiritual energy.

9. Yin Yoga



If you want to calm and balance your body and mind, this is where you'll find your zen. Yin Yoga is a slow-paced style in which poses are held for five minutes or longer. Even though it is passive, Yin Yoga becomes quite challenging due to the long holds, especially if your body is not used to it. Yin focuses on applying moderate stress to the connective tissues - the tendons, fascia, and ligaments - with the aim of increasing circulation in the joints and improving flexibility. Yin poses are passive, meaning you're supposed to relax muscles and let gravity do the work. And they're long, so you'll practice patience here too. You'll use props so your body can release into the posture instead of actively flexing or engaging the muscles. Like meditation, it may make you feel agitated and restless at first, but stick with it for few weeks and its restorative powers will have you hooked.

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for people who need to stretch and unwind. It is very important to note that Yin Yoga is not recommended for people who are super flexible as they might overdo it in some poses, or anyone who has a connective tissue disorder.

10. Restorative Yoga



Restorative yoga is a perfect way to relax and soothe frayed nerves. It is a gentle, relaxing and passive style that allows you to relax and release the body into a gentle stretch that is held for as long as 10 minutes. Basically, it is less work, more relaxation. This style makes use of a wide range of props, including bolsters, blocks, straps, and blankets. The intention is to provide support within each pose and help you sink into deep relaxation. There's also psychic cleansing: the mind goes to mush and you feel brand new. It's something like group nap time for grownups. It's better not to fall asleep, though, because a Restorative Yoga session is better than taking a nap!

Best For: This type of Yoga is best for everyone. It's a good Yoga practice for anyone who has a hard time slowing down, who have experienced insomnia or who is struggling with anxiety.

Apart from the above well-known forms of Yoga, there are some practices which are not known and practiced by many folks. We have researched them thoroughly and have brought them forward exclusively for you.

1. Jivamukti Yoga



This form of Yoga is a physical, limit-pushing practice that reintegrates Yoga's traditional spiritual elements in an educational way for Western practitioners. Jivamukti signifies "liberation while living." It starts with a standardized warm-up sequence unique to Jivamukti and is also incorporated with chanting, meditation, spiritual readings and affirmations.

2. Sivananda Yoga



This is an unhurried Yoga practice that typically focuses on the same 12 basic asanas or variations thereof every time, bookended by suryanamaskar (sun salutations) and savasana (corpse pose). Sometimes, chanting and meditation

are also included in this Yoga. Sivananda Yoga is designed to increase the strength and flexibility of the spine.

Sivananda's system is summarized into five main principles: exercise (*asanas*); breathing (*pranayama*); relaxation (*savasana*); diet (vegetarian), and positive thinking (*Vedanta*) and meditation (*dhyana*).

3. Viniyoga



Viniyoga is a highly individualized practice in which you learn to adapt poses and goals to their own needs and abilities. 'Vini' actually means differentiation, adaptation, and appropriate application. This is a Yoga approach that adapts various means and methods of practice to the unique condition, needs, and interests of the individual. It individualizes and actualizes the process of self-discovery and personal transformation. Instead of focusing on stretching to get strong and flexible, Viniyoga uses the principles of Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF). PNF simply means warming up and contracting a muscle before stretching it. This decreases your chance of injury.

5.2 What is Power Yoga?



The concept of Power Yoga has been getting some buzz for quite some time now, but a lot of people are confused as to what the practice actually entails. Power Yoga is used to describe vigorous and Vinyasa-style yoga. Two American yogis, Beryl Bender Birch and Bryan Kest, both of whom studied with Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, are most often credited with inventing Power Yoga. Power yoga's popularity has spread around the world and is now taught in most studios.

Power Yoga doesn't stick to the same sequence of poses each time like Ashtanga does, so the style varies depending on the Yoga instructors. Some rooms are heated, while others keep it cool. Some instructors follow the same series of poses, while others mix things up every session.

But with all these things considered, there are some definite underlying themes that are evident in the majority of Power Yoga classes.

1. It's quick!

Power Yoga is an intense workout that will make you sweat. Its sessions move with a faster rhythm than Ashtanga Yoga.

2. It's great for Strength Training!

In Power Yoga, you lift and hold your entire body's weight constantly which helps you get your body into gear. It builds strength and makes your arms feel the burn.

3. It makes you feel energized!

Power Yoga sessions generally leave people feeling calm, composed and happy. It takes your energy to the next level leaving your mind and body relaxed.

Conclusion

Yoga is significant for your physical and mental well-being; hence it becomes really important that you choose the correct form of Yoga, especially if you are a beginner. It is not mandatory that if 'X' form of Yoga fits your friend or colleague then it will fit you also. Different types of Yoga might be best for different people. A person who is hyper-mobile and flexible doesn't need the same thing as someone who's muscular and stiff. So choose what fits you best and achieve your Yoga goals.



Chapter 6

Yoga Postures - Do's and Don't



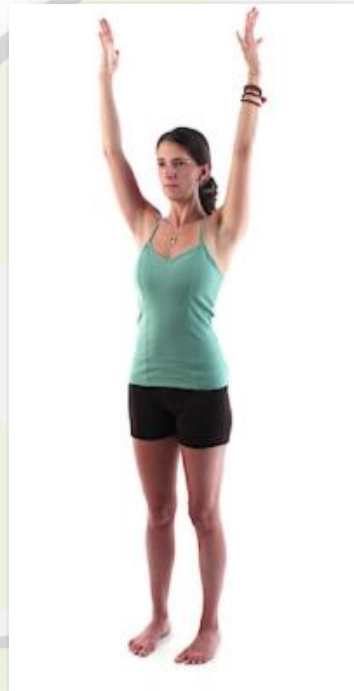
Yoga is a system- a holistic system of refining the body, the mind, and the spirit in unison. Ultimately, it is well-being, peace, and bliss. Yoga postures help strengthen the endocrine system and also bring the emotions under control through concentration and relaxation. Hence, it is essential to learn Yoga postures correctly, in order to practice them comfortably without injuring your body in any way.

It's not easy to narrow everything down since there are over 300 positions in the physical yoga (asana) practice, but we have tried to bring for you the obligatory and the needful poses that can start you off on the right path.

However, it is important to note that you don't have to be able to do all these poses exactly as mentioned — ALWAYS listen to your body and modify the pose as per your convenience, if needed.

6. 1 Yoga Poses: Do's and Don'ts

1. Mountain Pose



The Mountain pose is the foundation of all the standing poses of Yoga which makes a great a starting position, resting pose, and a tool to improve posture. It gives you a sense of grounding into your feet and lets you feel the ground beneath your feet. For beginners, it may just seem to look like a normal standing exercise but it has a lot of strings attached.

Do's:

1. Stand with your feet together and your arms at your sides. Press your weight evenly across the balls and arches of your feet.

2. Engage your quadriceps to lift your kneecaps and lift up through the inner thighs.
3. Draw your abdominals in and up as you lift your chest and press the tops of the shoulders down.
4. Feel your shoulder blades coming towards each other and open your chest, but keep your palms facing inwards towards the body.
5. Imagine a string drawing the crown of the head up to the ceiling and breathe deeply into the torso. Hold for 5-8 breaths.

Don'ts:

1. Do not practice Mountain Pose if you are currently experiencing headache or low blood pressure
2. Do not practice Yoga if you are insomniac or lightheaded and/or dizzy.

2. Downward Facing Dog Pose



Down dog is one of the most widely recognized Yoga postures, but it's also a complicated one. It stretches and strengthens the entire body, builds strength, increases flexibility and even relieves back pain. Down dog can be straight up painful if you're not properly warmed up. So it is always advised to warm-up your body before working with downward facing dog Yoga pose.

Do's:

1. Rest on to all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and knees under your hips.
2. Tuck under your toes and lift your hips up off the floor as you draw them up at back towards your heels.

3. Keep your knees slightly bent if your hamstrings are tight, otherwise try and straighten out your legs while keeping your hips back.
4. Walk your hands forward to give yourself more length if you need to.
5. Press firmly through your palms and rotate the inner elbows towards each other.
6. Hold for 5-8 breaths before dropping back to hands and knees to rest.

Don'ts:

1. Do not let your hands and feet dance while practicing these postures, instead make them centered and firmly rooted to the floor. It might stress your wrist or ankle if the placement goes wrong.
2. While performing this Yoga practice, do not disconnect your arms and shoulders. Let them be connected and firm to give you the sense of your spine growing stronger.
3. Do not round your back, as it may lead to a misalignment of shoulder, spine and even lead to tight hip flexors.

3. Plank Pose



Plank is one of the best postures for you as it teaches you to balance on your hands while using the entire body to support it. They not only involve your abs but also your lower back, glutes, hamstrings, shoulders, chest and upper back. It makes you stronger to the core and helps you get a toned belly and abs.

Do's:

1. Raise your body up till you form a straight line across your head to hips.
2. Press through the heels of your hands and spread your shoulder blades apart.

Don'ts:

1. Prevent head from looking up.

2. Ensure that your elbows are no too far away from your shoulder alignment.

4. Triangle Pose



Triangle Pose Yoga has the ability to bring stability, strength, and stamina in your life. Therapeutically, it is good for strengthening the core and legs. It also helps to shed extra fat from various parts of the body i.e. stomach, hips, thighs and waist. It is a wonderful standing posture to stretch the sides of the waist, open up the lungs, strengthen the legs and tone the entire body.

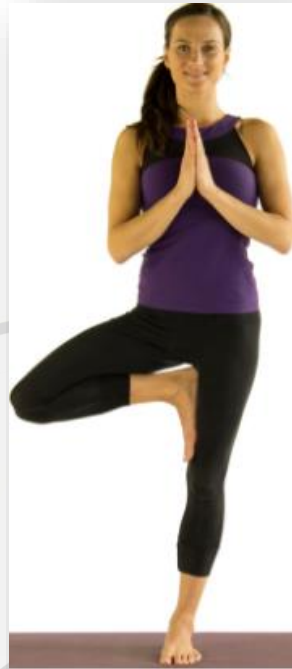
Do's:

1. Stand with your feet one leg's length i.e. approximately 3-4 feet apart.
2. Your right foot should be 90 degrees out and your left toes in by about 45 degrees.
3. Maintain the position as per your comfort with normal breathing and come to the original position by inhaling.

Don'ts:

1. Don't turn your head to look in the upward direction.
2. Look straight ahead and keep both sides of the neck evenly long.
3. Don't take the support of your knee while performing this asana as it exerts excess pressure on your knee that may lead to knee problems.
4. Should not be performed by people suffering from a migraine, neck or back problems.

5. Tree Pose



Tree pose is an awesome standing balance for the beginners to work on to gain focus and clarity and learn to breathe while standing and keeping the body balanced on one foot. It establishes strength and balance in the legs, and helps you feel centered, steady, and grounded. Practicing Tree pose also elongates your spine, stretches your chest, shoulders, and inner thighs and prevents slouching.

Do's:

1. Practice the pose with your back against the wall especially if you feel a bit unsteady on your feet.
2. Use a chair for support if you are a beginner or have any issues with your balance.
3. Keep your abdominals engaged and shoulders relaxed while performing this pose.

Don'ts:

1. Don't rest the sole of your foot against the kneecap of your standing leg as this puts unnecessary pressure on your joint.
2. Don't raise your arms overhead in this pose if you have high blood pressure.
3. Don't lean into the standing leg and don't turn out the foot on the standing or the supporting leg. This will misalign the supporting knee and hip.

6. Warrior 1 Pose



Warrior 1 is one of the most difficult standing poses. It is very vigorous that demands focus and determination to meet its challenges. But at the same time, it gives confidence and stretches the hips and thighs while building strength in the entire lower body and core.

Do's:

1. Practice Warrior 1 Yoga posture with an empty stomach and bowel. Ensure a gap of four to six hours between your meals and practice so that the food is completely digested and you are energetic for the workout.
2. Make sure that your back foot is evenly grounded—spread your baby toe toward the back of the mat and push into your outer heel while performing this pose.

Don'ts:

1. If you have neck problems, do not look up at your hands after you stretch them.
2. Do not perform if you are suffering from heart problems or high blood pressure.

7. Warrior 2 Pose



The physical expression of Warrior 2 pose represents the focused attention and warrior strength required to prepare for battle. It is an external hip opener and opens up the inner thighs. Practicing Warrior 2 can help to aid digestion by stimulating the abdominal organs, and can relieve backaches. It also improves stamina, endurance, balance, and concentration.

Do's:

1. While performing this pose, the balancing might become difficult. In such a case, decrease the distance between your feet slightly.
2. Maintain smooth and even breaths while performing this posture. They will help you to stay calm especially when the mind starts to get agitated by the physical challenge.

Don'ts:

1. Do not lose on your back leg instead keep both your legs equally engaged while performing this Yoga pose.
2. Do not go too far forward with the upper body; instead, keep your back wrist over your back ankle as you sink into the pose.

8. Seated Forward Bend Pose



Seated forward bend is the perfect fold for everyone to start to open up the body and learn to breathe through uncomfortable positions. It can be performed at any level of Yoga mastery: beginners can learn it, intermediate Yoga practitioners do it, and masters also find many benefits from this pose, especially when one knows key points in its technique. As a forward folding posture, Seated Forward Bend pose is calming and relaxing and can help with stress, anxiety, insomnia, headaches, and mild depression. Physically, the pose stretches the spine, shoulders, and hamstrings, stimulates the internal organs, and can also improve digestion and help to ease menstrual discomfort.

Do's:

1. Keep your shoulders and back relaxed away from your ears, broaden across the collarbones, and reach your sternum forward toward your toes while performing this pose.
2. Remain in the pose anywhere from 5 to 20 deep breaths. On an inhale, slowly make your way back to an upright position.

Don'ts:

1. Don't raise your shoulders while performing this posture.
2. Avoid bending the knees – keep your legs straight.
3. Try avoiding too much curving of your spine in its middle. Keep your back as straight as possible, but without too much tension, and bend from the hips.

9. Bridge Pose



The bridge is a good beginner's backbend that stretches the front body and strengthens the back body. Bridge Pose opens the chest, heart, and shoulders. It stretches the spine, the back of the neck, the thighs, and the hip flexors (front hip joints). Because your heart is higher than your head in this pose, it is considered a mild inversion (less strenuous than other inversions, such as Headstand) and holds all the benefits of inversions like relief from stress, fatigue, anxiety, headaches, insomnia, and mild depression. Bridge Pose also calms the mind and is known to be therapeutic for individuals with high blood pressure. Since it opens the chest, it increases lung capacity, which is therapeutic for those with asthma.

Do's:

1. Keep your shoulder blades drawn together as you extend your arms beneath your torso.
2. Keep your hands alongside the body with your palms pressing into the mat rather than clasping your hands beneath your torso.

Don'ts:

1. Don't let your feet turn out, which closes off the space in your low back. Instead, keep the outer edges of your feet parallel to the outer edges of your mat.
2. Do not roll to the outer edges of your feet or let your knees drop together.
3. Do not turn your head to the right or left when you're in the pose. Doing so can cause neck injury.

10. Child's Pose



Child's Pose is often used at the beginning of a Yoga session to get grounded and centered. It is meant to be a relaxing and steadying type of pose. It is an awesome posture not just for beginners but for Yoga practitioners of all levels. As this is a resting pose, it helps relax the body. The regulated breathing helps restore you to a state of calmness and also stimulates digestion and elimination.

Do's:

1. Go slow and exercise caution.
2. Maintain a focus on your breathing and take full breaths during the practice.

Don'ts:

1. Not to be performed by pregnant women.
2. Should not be performed by people suffering from any kind of knee injury, ligament tears, or ankle problems.

Conclusion

Though there are many asanas and postures available as part of Yoga, in this chapter we have focussed on the ones significant for the beginners. These are certain postures that are essential for you to learn so you can feel comfortable with Yoga and practice them on your own at home. However, while performing these postures, you need to pay special attention and care that you do not strain or injure your body parts.

Chapter 7

Equipment and Accessories Mandatory for Yoga



Initially, thousands of years back when Yoga was evolved, there was no Yoga equipment. Practicing and learning Yoga only required the complete engagement and involvement of your mind, body, and spirit. The latter is still true, with the only difference that, today, the modern Yoga practitioners feel comfortable and find convenient to practice with a few basic accessories which make the learning easy.

Through this guide, we are trying to make your Yoga journey comfortable, easy and enjoyable. Hence, we are making this effort to research, gather and bring together all the factors that contribute to this.

Now, when it comes to accessories, some fall in the category of Essentials while the others fall under choices, where it totally depends on the practitioners to use for it or leave it.

7.1 Yoga Essentials

As the name suggests, these are some of the unavoidable accessories needed for Yoga.

1. Yoga Mat



Yoga mats are specially fabricated mats used as an aid during the practice of Yoga to prevent hands and feet slipping while practicing the asanas. Having your own personal Yoga mat means you can take it anywhere and use it anytime. There will be days when you would wish to practice Yoga outdoors while other days indoors. It would be convenient to take your mat wherever and whenever you want to. When Yoga becomes a part of your weekly or daily routine – a more durable, high-quality mat is a better option. These yoga mats run a bit pricey but are totally worth it. So before buying your mat, keep in mind below tips, which will make every penny worth the price:

(a) Eco-conscious

There are plenty of mats made from plant-based and renewable materials, like tree rubber and jute; many are also PVC- and latex-free. They are highly recommended as they are softer and flexible.

(b) Length

Make sure the mat is long enough. You want to make sure your hands and feet are both on the mat especially while practicing poses like Downward Dog. Extra-long yoga mats tend to run from 72 to 84 inches.

(c) Thickness

Vigorous practices like Ashtanga, Vinyasa, and Power Yoga may warrant a quarter-inch-thick mat so you don't get bruised. You can go with a thinner mat for more gentle asanas or those done in a carpeted home. Make sure it's a yoga mat, though — thick, squishy fitness mats make it tougher to balance.

(d) Texture

Ensure that you're comfortable with the way the mat feels. Yoga mats are sometimes referred to as "sticky mats," due to their textured grip, which prevents your hands and feet from slipping during poses. Some mats — particularly eco mats — have a nubby, "natural" texture; others are more like the rubber sole of a shoe.

(e) Shop around

If you're having trouble figuring out which mat features you want, try taking suggestions from your friends, colleagues, and family and know what they prefer. You can even visit the stores and malls and get the opinion of sellers to understand which Yoga mat is preferable for you. Reading customer reviews and comparing products online is always helpful, too, and can help you find a good deal or offer.

(f) Manduka Mats

The Manduka Yoga mats aren't cheap, but they're extra comfortable and come with a lifetime guarantee. They cost you around \$80 but the mat is really worth the price paid for. A normal mat would cost you \$20 but if you are planning to practice Yoga twice a week or more, then that mat is going to smell and fall apart in no time. And a smelly mat can be irritating and turn off. Hence, a Manduka mat is preferable. Also, it has a lifetime guarantee, so Manduka will send you a new one if for some strange reason something happens to it. These come in about twenty really cool colors so you can unroll with pride wherever you practice Yoga.

2. Yoga Towel



This is a Yoga necessity.

Most Yoga mats lack a sticky quality which makes it very easy to slip-and-slide once the heart starts pumping and the heat starts building. A Yoga session can quickly go from awesome and exhilarating to slippery and stressful without a good Yoga Towel. If hot yoga sessions or vinyasa/ power flow sessions are typical for you, then this is, even more, a necessity.

This is because you may end up sweating quite a bit during your practice. If you have a good mat towel, you need not worry about sweat stinging your eyes when you're trying to focus and balance.

A standard hand or beach towel usually works just fine to soak up the sweat, but if you're dedicated to Ashtanga, Bikram, or Power Yoga, you may want to check out yoga-specific towels, which fit the entire length of your mat and are made from an extra-absorbent material that dries quickly. Some of these Yoga towels even have rubber nubs on the bottom to further prevent slippage.

These towels should be super absorbent, non-slip and quick drying.

3. Yoga Bag



Every individual performing Yoga owns a Yoga mat, definitely. So, the question arises how does a Yoga practitioner carries it outdoors and around?

A yoga mat bag is the answer.

A yoga mat bag is essential because it not only makes it really easy to carry around your mat, but also a lot of mat bags are made with extra compartments to hold your keys, towels, wallets, water bottles, etc. The bag is basically a yoga purse which makes the carrying process much, much easier – especially for the heavier duty yoga mats mentioned above. Yoga bags come in all shapes & sizes and are easily available at many retail outlets, and online shopping websites. For the environmentally conscious, mat bags made from recycled or organic materials are readily available. These include eco-friendly material like hemp, which is both durable and sustainable.

Just like every other yoga accessory out there, a yoga mat bag is not seem to be a mandatory accessory for you to gain the many benefits of Yoga. But, it is a very useful tool if you happen to have your own yoga mat. The sheer convenience of being able to tote around your mat and other belongings make it a worthy investment in the long run.

Customized Yoga Mat Bags

If you are ready to go the extra mile for a fully personalized yoga mat bag, you can even make one yourself. By making your own mat bag, you have total creative control over what material it will be made of and what designs you want to put on it. A one-of-a-kind bag that you make yourself can even help motivate you to go out and practice Yoga.

4. Yoga Strap



The main function and purpose of a strap is to “extend” your arms to piece out the lack of flexibility. And this is its main benefit: it allows you to **do the poses** you won’t be able to do normally. For example, if you are a beginner and the seated forward bend pose is beyond your abilities right now, you can use a strap to do the pose properly: to keep your legs and spine straight and relax your back.

Providing flexibility is not the only benefit of a yoga strap; another thing is to give you **support**. There are poses for maintaining balance, and they require some strength and stretching, and here a strap can be very useful. And it becomes too difficult for the beginners to learn to do it without a Yoga strap.

The next benefit is the **safety** that a Yoga strap provides. Since the straps, or as they also called belts, are mostly used by beginners, they help to perform difficult poses safely. You won’t overstretch your limbs, pull a muscle, or even fall on the floor. With a Yoga strap, you can learn the poses and postures without much trouble and the risk of getting an injury.

Another benefit that a Yoga strap provides is: to **hold and transport your Yoga mat**. Mats can be unruly creatures, unrolling all over the place, so it is a good option to hold them. The bag protects your mat from dust, water, etc. and will also help you to unpack your mat faster.

5. Yoga Block



A yoga block is basically a brick-shaped "thing" made of cork, wood or hard-foam. They are usually about 9 x 6 x 4 inches in size. Yoga blocks act as the peanut butter to a jelly, the dough to a pizza, or the chocolate to a cookie. Yoga blocks are a great prop to keep at home and incorporate into a personal practice. Wherever they are being used, be sure to keep them close by to help lengthen, extend, deepen, and soften. They are a nice little helper that you can use to facilitate many yoga poses, especially the ones that involve standing stretches.

Stretching is not the only thing a yoga block can be used for. It can also be used for general strength exercises. Putting a yoga block in between your legs or holding one in your hands can introduce an additional element of resistance during strength training, by making the exercise more intense and satisfying. As already mentioned, most yoga blocks are made of foam, which is cheaper, cork or wood. When you do strength exercises, the use of a heavier yoga block can prove to be more helpful than using a very light one. More weight means more work for you. The Yoga Blocks serve beneficial for expectant mothers too since they reduce the amount of energy required to perform asanas.

7.2 Yoga Auxiliaries

As the name suggests, there are some of the complementary accessories for Yoga. It is totally up to the practitioners to choose and use them in their Yoga sessions.

1. Yoga Blanket



Yoga Blankets or Yoga Rugs are becoming increasingly popular with practitioners of Yoga. A blanket is a wonderful yoga accessory to create comfort, support, and to curl up with on the couch. They provide additional height, absorb perspiration, and help to maintain poses better.

These blankets can prove to be very efficient while doing yoga poses because you can fold it or adjust it any way you want to fit and support yourself while doing the various yoga positions. You can roll the blankets so it can support your back, legs or neck, which can be very useful while performing the yoga postures.

2. Yoga Bolster



A Yoga bolster is like a body-sized pillow but firmer and either rectangular or circular in shape. Bolsters are mainly used in Yin, restorative, and Iyengar Yoga styles. Its main purpose is to create relaxation, help soften a posture, or aid in opening the body, all basically to provide comfort. During sit ups, you can place them on the ground over your feet for extra support and grip.

A regular yoga bolster will weigh a decent and practical 7 pounds and measures 27 inches long. Though there is a wide variety of Bolsters available, but it is always recommended to choose a lighter one and cover it with an outer case.

3. Yoga Mat Cleaner



Yes, it is necessary to clean that magic yoga carpet of yours. It deserves some TLC too. You never know what's lurking in your mat after multiple yoga classes and sweaty feet. So, you need to freshen them up with some good mat cleaners available in the market, even online. It's important to know exactly how the mat should be cleaned and to stick to those suggested guidelines. Some mats require only warm water and soap while others can be cleaned with mat cleaner. There is a really great mat cleaner from Manduka. It's a really great vinegar cleaning solution, and convenient to carry so you can clean your mat right after practice.

Regularly cleaning your yoga mat is imperative if you want to keep it smelling fresh, looking great, and free of harmful germs, bacteria, fungi, and viruses.

4. Yoga Pants



Not just who practice yoga at home but most women and men find it easy to wear yoga pants for its comfort factor. Comfortable, stretchy, close to the skin and they always fit. They are preferred because they are hygienic and sweat-free. You do not get the musty smell that other sports wear emit after a sweaty workout. Other than that, they are easy to pull up or down that is helpful during asanas, making them convenient for people with bladder control problems.

5. A Sipper – Water Bottle



It's important to stay hydrated, no matter what style of yoga you practice. While practicing Yoga at home, keep a water bottle close to you so that you

drink water regularly and on a timely-basis. For hot yoga classes, you may need an insulated bottle, to help keep your water cold throughout the session.

Conclusion

We have tried and covered almost all the essentials and other important complementary Yoga accessories. These might be helpful and provide you an aid while practicing Yoga. We do not want to leave any stone unturned to help facilitate Yoga for a Healthy lifestyle.



Chapter 8

Yoga Exercises

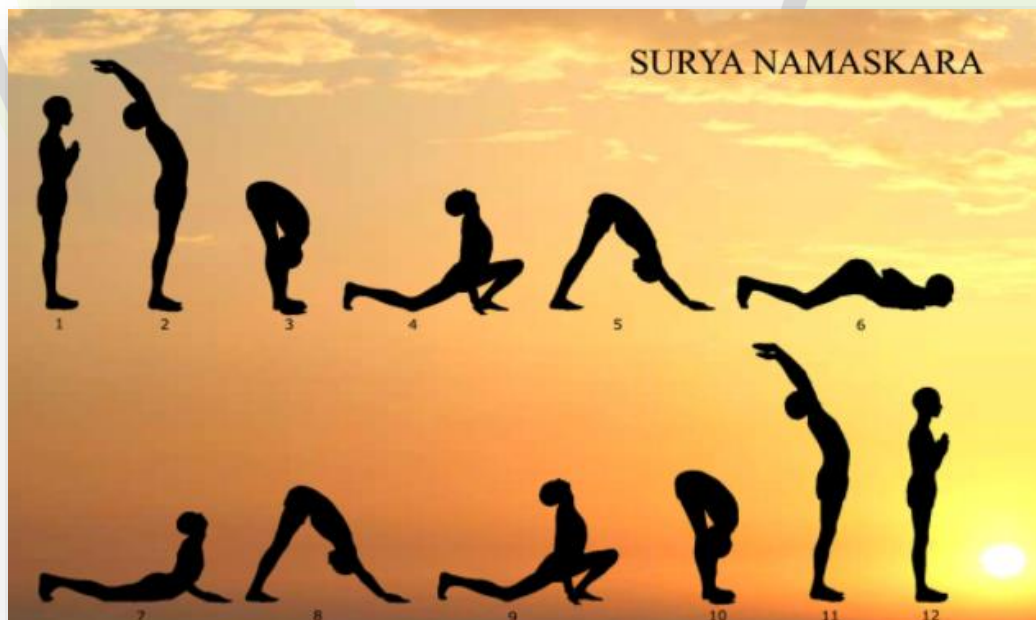


By now, you must have already known how important Yoga is for your health and fitness. Yoga exercises (asanas) increases your flexibility and improves your strength. Yoga has the zeal to change your energy. If your morning routine starts with dragging yourself out of bed and gulping down a cup of hot coffee, try ten rounds of Surya Namaskar or some pranayama, and notice the energizing effects it has on the nervous system. Conversely, if you need a change later on in the day, just a few minutes of asana practice can re-balance the nervous system, calm the mind and give you a different perspective.

So, the bottom line is that Yoga makes you feel better. It makes you feel different, more open, present and happier by reducing the levels of anxiety. Now, when you already know that there are tens of dozens of advantages and benefits of Yoga, then it is also important to know how to practice Yoga. This means that you need to really study and learn the technique to perform the Yoga asanas and exercises. If not, you may end up damaging your body, spine, back or any other body part. To help avoid such kind of situation, we have brought forward the detailed steps for some of the popular Yoga asanas. This step-by-step procedure would make it easy for you to perform these exercises.

But, before starting with the Yoga exercises, we have brought steps to perform slow Sun Salutations which is part of the warm-up routine associated with Yoga.

8.1 Sun Salutations



Surya Namaskar, or Sun Salutation, is a series of postures that warms, strengthens, and aligns the entire body. It serves as an all-purpose yoga tool, kind of like a hammer that's also a saw and a screwdriver if you can imagine such a thing. It is a classical sequence of twelve yoga positions, for an energizing warm-up routine that is performed at the start of every Yoga session. Dozens of muscles are stretched and toned in this Yoga exercise.

There are 12 sun salutations which are important for warming you up before your Yoga session.

1. Pranamasana (Prayer pose)



- (i) Stand at the edge of your mat, keep your feet together and balance your weight equally on both the feet.
- (ii) Then, expand your chest and relax your shoulders.
- (iii) As you breathe in, lift both arms up from the sides and as you exhale, bring your palms together in front of the chest in prayer position.

2. Hastauttanasana (Raised Arms pose)



- (i) Breathing in, lift the arms up and back, keeping the biceps close to the ears.
- (ii) In this pose, you need to stretch the whole body up from the heels to the tips of the fingers.

3. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose)



- (i) Breathe out; bend forward from the waist, while keeping the spine erect.
- (ii) As you exhale completely, bring the hands down to the floor beside the feet.
- (iii) You may bend the knees, if necessary, to bring the palms down to the floor. Now make a gentle effort to straighten the knees.

4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)



- (i) Breathe in; push your right leg back, as far back as possible.
- (ii) Bring the right knee to the floor and look up.
- (iii) Ensure that the left foot is exactly in between the palms.

5. Dandasana (Stick pose)



- (i) As you breathe in, take the left leg back and bring the whole body in a straight line.
- (ii) Keep your arms perpendicular to the floor.

6. Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with Eight Parts Or Points)



- (i) Gently bring your knees down to the floor and exhale. Take the hips back slightly, slide forward, rest your chest and chin on the floor. Raise your posterior a little bit.
- (ii) The two hands, two feet, two knees, chest and chin (eight parts of the body touch the floor).

7. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)



- (i) Slide forward and raise the chest up into the Cobra posture. You may keep your elbows bent in this pose, the shoulders away from the ears. Look up.
- (ii) As you inhale, make a gentle effort to push the chest forward; as you exhale, make a gentle effort to push the navel down.

8. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)



- (i) Breathe out; lift the hips and the tailbone up, chest downwards in an 'inverted V' (/\) posture.
- (ii) If possible, try and keep the heels on the ground and make a gentle effort to lift the tailbone up, going deeper into the stretch.

9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)



- (i) Breathe in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands, left knee down to the floor, press the hips down and look up.
- (ii) Place the right foot exactly between the two hands and the right calf perpendicular to the floor.
- (iii) In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch.

10. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot pose)



- (i) Breathe out, bring the left foot forward. Keep the palms on the floor. You may bend the knees, if necessary.

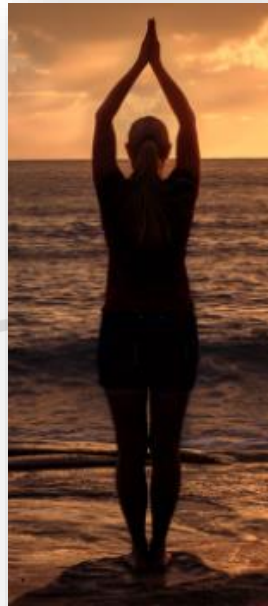
- (ii) Breathe out; bring the left foot forward. Keep the palms on the floor.
You may bend the knees, if necessary.

11. Hastauttanasana (Raised Arms pose)



- (i) Breathe in, roll the spine up, hands go up and bend backward a little bit, pushing the hips slightly outward.
- (ii) Ensure that your biceps are beside your ears. The idea is to stretch up more rather than stretching backward.

12. Tadasana



- (i) As you exhale, first straighten the body, and then bring the arms down.
- (ii) Relax in this position; observe the sensations in your body.

8.2 Yoga Exercises

There are 100+ Yoga exercises but it is quite difficult to cover all of them here. So, for now, we have covered the ones which are easy and convenient for the beginners to practice.



1. Sukhasna



This pose is best-suited for meditation for both beginners and advanced practitioners. Sukhasana comes from the Sanskrit word 'Sukham' that means easy, pleasure, comfort, and pleasure. People of all ages can do this asana.

How to Do?

- (i) Sit down normally on the floor. Stretch out your legs ahead in front.
- (ii) Now cross your legs and broaden your knees, in order that you can slip your both foot under the opposite knee.
- (iii) After that, you have to bend your knees along with fold your legs.
- (iv) Keep your feet loose, in order that the external edges lay on the floor and the inner curves are settled beneath the inverse leg.
- (v) Your thighs and crossed legs ought to frame a little triangle. Keep some space between your feet and pelvis.
- (vi) Now sit with your buttock in a neutral position. Attempt to hold for a breath or two and after that gradually bring down yourself back on to the floor.
- (vii) Balance your tailbone and pubic bone in a manner that they are equidistant from the floor.
- (viii) Keep your hands on your knees with the palm facing down and expand your tailbone against the floor. (You can keep your hands in Gyan mudra).

2. Cobra Pose



Cobra Pose is best known for its ability to increase the flexibility of the spine. It stretches the chest while strengthening the spine and shoulders. This pose also stimulates the abdominal organs, improving digestion.

How to Do?

- (i) Lie on your stomach with your toes flat on the floor and forehead resting on the ground.
- (ii) Keep your legs close together, with your feet and heels lightly touching each other.
- (iii) Place your hands (palms downwards) under your shoulders, keeping your elbows parallel and close to your torso.
- (iv) Taking a deep breath in, slowly lift your head, chest, and abdomen while keeping your navel on the floor.
- (v) Pull your torso back and off the floor with the support of your hands.
- (vi) Keep breathing with awareness, as you curve your spine vertebra by vertebra. If possible, straighten your arms by arching your back as much as possible; tilt your head back and look up.
- (vii) Ensure that your feet are still close together. Keep smiling and breathing. Smiling Cobras!
- (viii) Don't overdo the stretch or overstrain yourself.
- (ix) Breathing out, gently bring your abdomen, chest and head back to the floor.

3. Boat Pose



This asana helps strengthen the abdomen core as well as the back muscles. Try and focus on straightening the position of your back rather than attempting to keep your legs higher. It also tones the leg and arm muscles.

How to Do?

- (i) Lie on your back with your feet together and arms beside your body.
- (ii) Take a deep breath in and as you exhale, lift your chest and feet off the ground, stretching your arms towards your feet.
- (iii) Your eyes, fingers, and toes should be in a line.
- (iv) Feel the tension in your navel area as the abdominal muscles contract.
- (v) Keep breathing deeply and easily while maintaining the pose.
- (vi) As you exhale, come back to the ground slowly and relax.

4. Chair Pose



Chair Pose clearly works the muscles of the arms and legs, and also stimulates the diaphragm and heart. It balances the body and brings determination to the mind.

How to Do?

- (i) Stand erect with your feet slightly apart.
- (ii) Inhale and raise your arms perpendicular to the floor. Either keep the arms parallel, palms facing inward, or join your palms.
- (iii) Exhale and bend your knees, trying to keep your thighs as parallel to the floor as possible.
- (iv) Your knees will project out over your feet, and your torso will lean forward slightly over your thighs until your torso forms an approximately right angle with the tops of your thighs.
- (v) Keep your thighs parallel to each other and push down on your pelvis towards your heels.
- (vi) Firm your shoulder blades against your back and keep your spine lengthened.
- (vii) Stay in this position for 30 seconds to a minute, while breathing evenly.

5. Seated Twist



Any Seated Twist Yoga poses aids digestion and relieves lower back pain. They are an amazing way to detoxify the body and calm the nervous system. Seated yoga twists fire up the digestive system to get things moving as well as stretch the back, shoulders, and neck.

How to Do?

- (i) Elongate your spine, and as you inhale, place your right-hand flat on the floor behind you and your left hand on your right knee.
- (ii) On the exhale, move deeper into the twist while looking over your right shoulder.
- (iii) Hold for five breaths, and then switch sides.

Conclusion

Yoga exercises form a preliminary part of the Yoga system that helps a person achieve a healthy and fit body to subsequently help the individual to focus on other higher branches of the Yoga system such as meditation and self-realization. These exercises have become a mainstream means for physical activity in today's era with a number of styles popping up across the board. Whatever the exercises might be, there is a plenty of variety for all age groups from beginners to advance. Whether you want to try out Yoga to boost your physical activity, to learn to have greater focus, or to relieve stress, there are many benefits of yoga exercises that will extend beyond the mat.

Chapter 9

Introduction to Meditation with Yoga



Most of you have heard meditation, it's a popular word for all of us today, but only a few of us truly know what meditation is.

“Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in Eternal awareness or pure consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging finitude in infinity.” – Swami Sivananda

Meditation has a one common goal – to stop the incessant activity of mind by transforming it. Meditation is the real antidote to our own personal sorrow, the anxiety, fear, hatred, and general confusions that beset the human condition. It gives us a deep rest, and the real meditation is deeper than the deepest sleep that you can ever have. When the mind becomes free from agitation, is calm and serene and at peace, meditation happens.

9.1 Common Myths about Meditation

For some people, meditation is mainly about establishing a focus or a concentration on a particular thing, or object, but for others, it is simply an imagination that provides us an inner peace or satisfaction. But these days it is commonly understood to mean some form of spiritual practice where one sits down with eyes closed and empties the mind to attain inner peace, relaxation or even an experience of God. Some people use the term as "my hobby is my meditation" or for jogging or art or music, hence creating confusion or misunderstanding. Some people think that the purpose of meditation is to stop the mind. They sit, and they try. Soon they get into a fight with their mind, a fight that they lose. Frustrated, they give up!



Before we take an insight into what Meditation is, let us understand what it is not.

1. Concentration

Concentration is fixing attention on to a particular object for a long duration of time. It means staring at something incessantly for a long time. Meditation is not concentration, instead it is de-concentration.

2. Loss of Control

Involuntary movements or sounds are not at all related to meditation or spirituality. Instead they are symptoms of loss of awareness and control over some parts of ourself.

3. Exercises

Meditation is neither about breathing nor exercises and postures. Yoga exercises and postures are for a healthy balance and wellbeing of your body and is no way related to meditation.

4. Mental Effort

To get rid of the mind blockages that prevent our thoughtful awareness, we should introspect but never use our mental effort. We cannot continuously enchant something in our mind to get rid of this awareness, we simply cannot.

9.2 What is Meditation?

The word meditation is derived from two Latin words: meditari (to think, to dwell upon, and to exercise the mind) and mederi (to heal). Its Sanskrit derivation 'medha' means wisdom.

Meditation is a process of transforming the mind. It is a technique to encourage and develop clarity of life, emotional positivity, and seeking a true nature of things around us. Meditation serves as the food for our soul. It nourishes the universal values of compassion, caring and sharing, responsibility, non-violence and peacefulness.



Meditation has been practiced since antiquity in numerous religious traditions and beliefs. Since the 19th century, it has spread from its Asian origins to Western cultures where it is commonly practiced both in private and business lives.

“Meditation is the way towards a stress-free life!”

1. It is ‘Universal’

Meditation is a universal process. It is not Eastern or Western, but is universal in its approach and application. The way it is practiced across various countries might be different in its form, but the ultimate goal of Meditation still remains the same everywhere.

2. It is ‘Awareness’

Meditation means Awareness and what you do with Awareness is Meditation. Watching your surroundings is meditation; listening to the birds is meditation. As long as these activities are free from any other distraction to the mind, it is effective meditation.

3. It is ‘Observing your Thoughts’

Meditation means cessation of the thought processes which roll into our minds from day till the night. It describes a state of consciousness, when the mind is free of scattered thoughts and various patterns. It means watching your own mind, neither fighting with it nor controlling it. Just being there, observing the thought processes without any judgment.

4. It is ‘Being Calm’

Meditation is being calm in any situation, despite of what others do or not do. It is just about letting things be, even letting people be howsoever they are and whatsoever they do. Not bothering about your surroundings, just being unrelated with the world.

5. It is ‘Effortless’

An effective Meditation is when the empty spaces and voids begin to develop inside you, and you tend to move into those spaces as and when you want to without an effort. This is refreshing and rejuvenating thus making you more aware of who you are.

9. 3 Why Meditation?

Now as we already know what exactly meditation is, it's time to understand why it is needed.



By most of the researchers, meditation is seen as one of the effective forms of stress buster and reduction. Studies show that people practicing a short course of Meditation of about 6 months have ended up paying significantly fewer visits to physicians and doctors. This implies that the use of medical care was significantly less for meditators compared to the non-meditators.

If you look into the benefits that meditation brings into your life, it feels that it is all the more relevant, all the more needed. In ancient times, meditation was used for enlightenment, to find the Self. And meditation is a way to get rid of misery, to overcome problems. Meditation has been the way to improve one's abilities. Leaving aside enlightenment, you see the social ills of today. The stress and tension call for one to meditate.

The more responsibility you have in life, more is the need for meditation. If you have nothing to do, you may not need meditation as much - because you have nothing to do. The busier you are, the less time you have, more work you have, more desires you have, ambitions you have - all the more you need to be meditative. Because meditation not only relieves you of stress and strain, it enhances your abilities to face challenges.

Meditation brings better health to us. It is an energizer for the mind. It is a lifeline for the body. It keeps your body in shape, helps your nervous system, helps your mind, your alertness, improves your perception and helps you to express yourself properly. What more do you want! Basically, you can say if you want to be happy you need to meditate. Happy and healthy! If you want to be happy and healthy, you got to be meditative!



Meditation helps to change your perception, perspective. Meditation helps you to alter the way you perceive things. It improves your perception and brings clarity in the mind. And it helps you in your relationships with people around, you know how you interact with people, what you see, what you say and how you act or react in different situations. So, in general, it helps in creating a violence-free society, disease-free body, confusion-free mind, inhibition-free intellect, trauma-free memory and sorrow-free soul!

9.4 Important Things to Consider

Practicing Meditation is easy but at the same time it is difficult to not let your mind and thoughts wander. Especially for beginners, it becomes a lot difficult to overcome the problems of lack of appeal and it seeming to be daunting. People start with meditation but generally fail to practice it regularly. Thus we have kept the above challenges in mind and have summarized few important things which, if considered, can help you to regularly pursue this practice.

1. Start small with 3-5 minutes or less

For the beginners who are willing to practice meditation, it is recommended and important to start only with a 3-5 minute session. Even a 3 minute long meditation can seem to be like a darn long time when you first start. So, there is no wrong in starting with lesser duration than 3 minutes. Directly pushing yourself too hard with a 10 or 15 minute long meditation can be cumbersome as it would be difficult to retain the focus on your mind and thoughts for such a long duration.

2. Understand the concept and the power of Meditation

Everything is done with a defined purpose in mind. For most of the people, this is valid in case of Meditation too, specifically for the novice. Meditation can never be a hobby, definitely cannot be a hobby, and if something is not a hobby, it entails an aim, a goal, a target or a reason. Thus, it is important for a meditator to first understand why he chose meditation, the reason behind it and then evaluate how he can eradicate his problem with the power of meditation. It is highly important for a person to understand the purpose for meditation. Only if he understands the problem, he can find the solution.

3. Understand the principles of Meditation

Beginning meditators often think the goal of meditation is to get to the point that they can focus without becoming distracted. A more useful goal is becoming aware of when your mind has drifted sooner. You can't restructure your thoughts if you haven't first developed the ability to identify your thoughts. Another principle of Meditation is to redirect your attention back to your point of focus without criticizing yourself.



4. Do it as you like, choose your own way

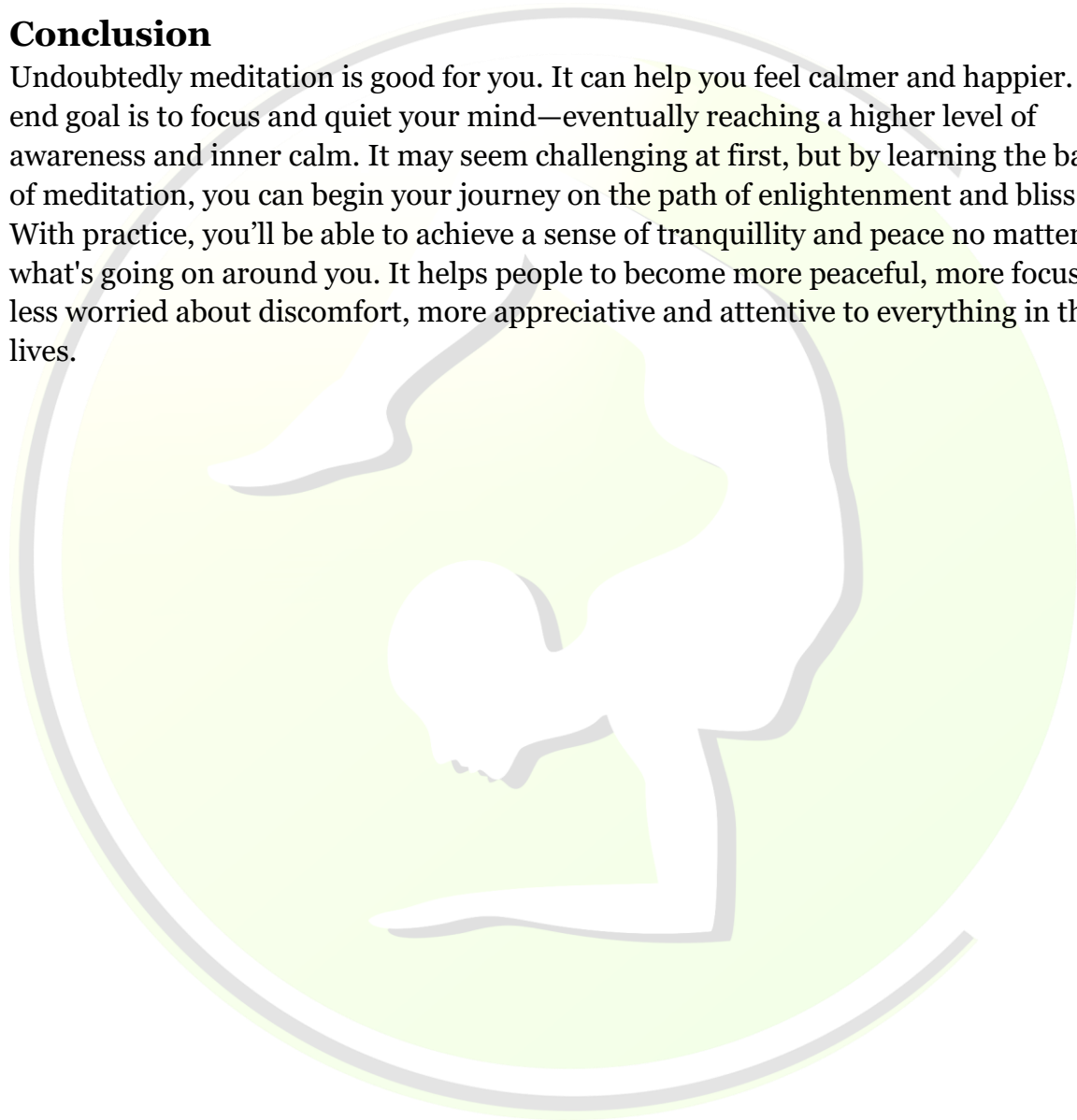
Since walking helps people concentrate and reduce distractibility, a meditation that involves walking can be a great place to start. Some people even choose mp3's to practice meditation. Apart from that, even the place where you are meditating matters. You can do it indoor or outdoor; in the midst of nature, or on your couch. It is totally up to you how you want to practice it.

5. Reduce All-or-Nothing Thinking

Realistically, there are only a small amount of people who will be willing to meditate on a regular basis. Another approach is to do formal daily practice of meditation for an initial period, and then start just incorporating meditation into your day in informal ways. Doing a sustained period of formal daily practice when you begin meditation will allow you to try different types of meditation, give you enough comfort and familiarity with it.

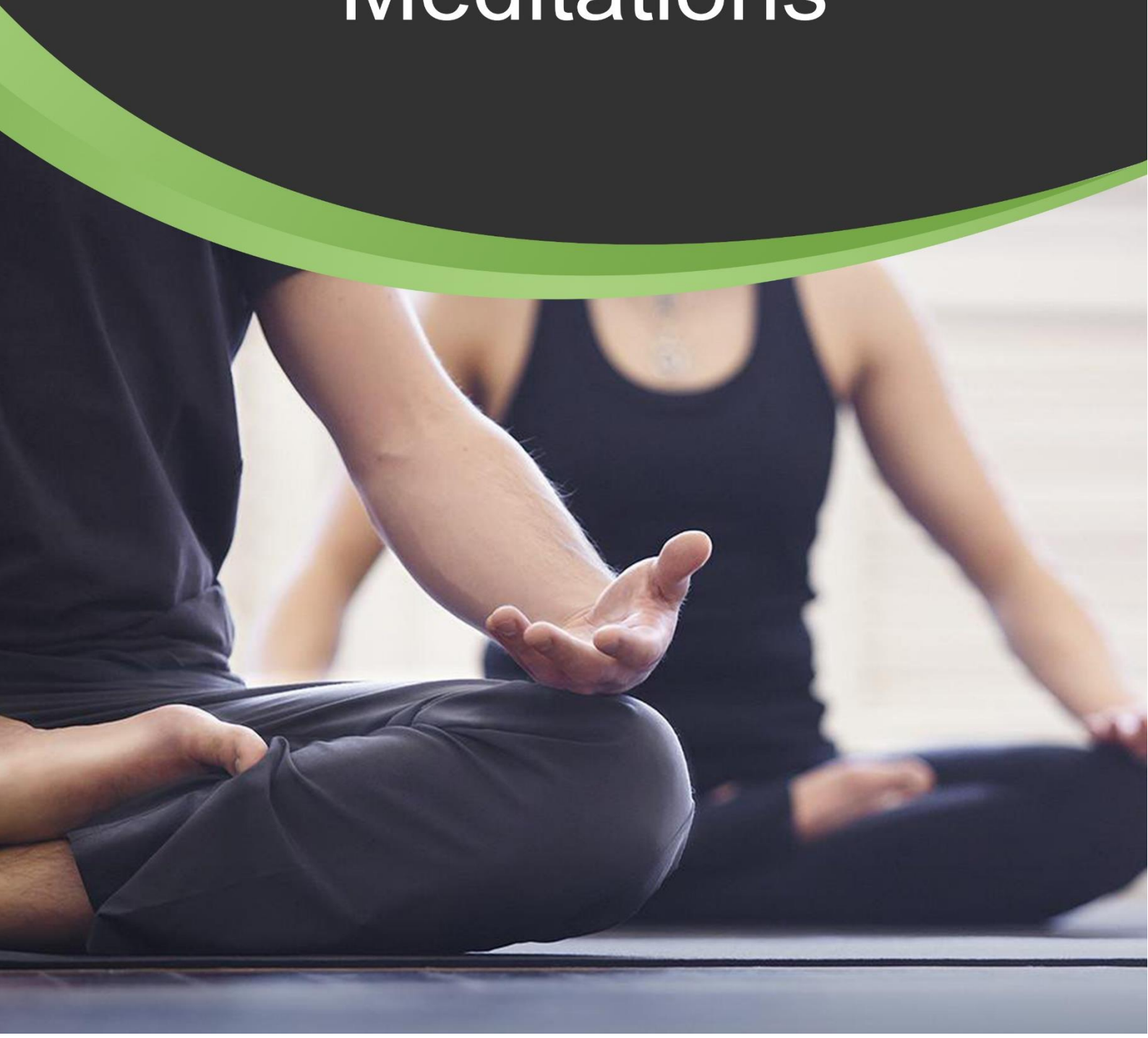
Conclusion

Undoubtedly meditation is good for you. It can help you feel calmer and happier. It's end goal is to focus and quiet your mind—eventually reaching a higher level of awareness and inner calm. It may seem challenging at first, but by learning the basics of meditation, you can begin your journey on the path of enlightenment and bliss. With practice, you'll be able to achieve a sense of tranquillity and peace no matter what's going on around you. It helps people to become more peaceful, more focused, less worried about discomfort, more appreciative and attentive to everything in their lives.



Chapter 10

Categories of Yoga Meditations



Meditation is not of a single type or category but it has multiple types. There are a lot of different ways of doing meditation and dozens of techniques are involved in the process. Thus, it becomes very important to know that which technique will work out the best for you. You may also find some misleading information on the Web regarding various types of meditation, so it is important for you to get a detailed knowledge of each category in order to understand which one is beneficial for you.

This chapter will help you navigate the sea of different practices of seated meditation, briefly explaining each of them. There are literally hundreds of types of meditation, so here we shall explore only the most popular ones.

10.1 General Types of Meditation

Meditation is usually classified based on the way they focus attention, into three categories: Focused Attention, Open Monitoring, and Effortless Presence.

1. Focused Attention



As the name suggests, this type of meditation is about focussing the attention on a single object during the entire session. This object may be the breath, a mantra, visualization, part of the body, external object, etc. With the due course of time, a practitioner's ability to keep the flow of attention in the chosen object gets stronger, and distractions become less common and short-lived.

Some common examples of Focussed Attention Meditation are Chakra meditation, Mantra Meditation, Zen.

2. Open Monitoring



This works on the reverse principle of the Focused Attention. Instead of focusing the attention on any one object, we keep it open, monitoring all aspects of our experience, without judgment or attachment. It is the process of non-reactive monitoring of the content of experience from moment to moment, without going into them. In this type of meditation, we monitor all kind of perceptions, be it internal or external without attaching to them in any form. Internal perceptions can be thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc, while External perceptions are like sound, smell, taste, etc.

Some common examples of Open Monitoring Meditation are Mindfulness meditation, Vipassana or Insight meditation, etc.

3. Effortless Presence



Effortless Presence is the state where the attention is not focused on anything in particular but reports on itself – quiet, empty, steady, and introverted. It is like a “Choiceless Awareness” or “Pure Being”. This is actually the true purpose behind all kinds of meditation and not a meditation type in itself. All traditional techniques of meditation recognize that the object of focus, and even the process of monitoring, is just a means to train the mind, so that effortless inner silence and deeper states of consciousness can be discovered. Eventually, both the object of focus and the process itself is left behind, and there is only left the true self of the practitioner, as “pure presence”.

10.2 Categories of Yoga Meditation

In this section, we will be discussing important types of Yoga meditations in detail for a clear understanding of each one of them:

1. Mindfulness Meditation



This is a Buddhist form of Meditation which works on the simple principle of keeping one's mind fully focused on the present. Present means only the current happenings, no past, or future. This is perhaps the most advisable way to get started with meditation.

The Buddha says our mind is like a chain of reactions and desires. When we catch ourselves in this downfall of reactions, we miss experiencing the true meaning of life. The human mind is tricky and a bit difficult to understand and control. For a human mind, the grass always seems to be greener on the other side of the fence. Mindfulness Meditation is about keeping the mind in the here and now, and enjoying the present moment with full focus and attention. The technique is simple where you just need to keep your attention on the breath. This might be easy to say, but for the untrained mind, it can be hard to achieve one-pointed attention for more than three minutes. So, you need to learn to control your thoughts while performing this type of meditation which wanders at different places – your past or future and keep it devoted to the present.

Purpose or Goal: It helps to retain focus on the physical and mental benefits of meditation. It also brings good things and energies into your life.

2. Mantra Meditation



The word "mantra" stands for an instrument of thought, basically a sacred sound which is a powerful way to focus the mind. This type of meditation requires conscious engagement on your part where you repeat the mantra multiple times with purpose and feeling. In chanting, you also include rhythm and pitch in your sounds to help expand your state of awareness. Chanting a mantra keeps the mind busy while you breathe in a specific pattern. It's like singing a song, your breath pattern becomes the same as the singer's breath pattern. Mantra meditation instructs your mind to focus or rest upon an object during meditation.

Purpose or Goal: Mantra meditation is useful when the mind is racing with many thoughts since it demands constant attention. Because a mantra is a word, and thoughts are usually perceived as words, it can be easier to keep the focus on a mantra rather than something else.

3. Insight Meditation



Insight Meditation is also known as Vipassana meditation. It enables one to see things as they really are. The technique of Insight meditation is based on self-observation and by observing the variants of the mind, a person can take control over their own mind. The chain of actions and reactions becomes conscious, and negativity and suffering disappears. In this type of mediation, the meditator uses his concentration as a tool by which his awareness can chip away at the wall of illusion that cuts him off from the living light of reality. It is a gradual process of ever-increasing awareness into the inner workings of reality itself.

Purpose or Goal: Insight or Vipassana is an excellent meditation to help you ground yourself in your body, and understand how the processes of your mind work. There are no formalities or rituals attached to the practice.

4. Sufi Meditation



Sufism is the way to one's heart.

Sufi meditation is directed towards the heart since it is the center and the seat of love and divine inspiration, and the heart does not falsify that which it sees. The ultimate aim of Sufi Meditation is to gain the knowledge that enables one to understand the Divine, Merciful and Compassionate power which is "God". Meditation in Sufism involves several steps; one must collect his or her energies from the outside world and gradually learn to focus them in the center of the heart.

Purpose or Goal: One will find peacefulness and freedom in Sufism meditation, but this is not its only goal. The main purpose of Sufi meditation is to understand the power and purity of God, the divine power.

5. Chakra Meditation



Chakra meditation is a form of meditation that consists of a set of relaxation techniques focused on bringing balance, relaxation, and well-being to the chakras. “Chakra” is an ancient Sanskrit word that means vortex or wheel which can be traced back to India. The Chakras are visualized as centers of energy that appear throughout your body. There are many Chakras all over the body, but the most known are seven. Each Chakra is associated with a color and different characteristics. The meditation is guided, and it is done by focusing the mind in this energy vortex and their qualities. Because your chakras are part of an intimately connected system, there is only so much work you can do on singular chakras. Chakras can become blocked and if even one of the 7 Chakras becomes blocked, it sets us up for physical and emotional problems which are something that no one wants. It’s better to meditate on all of them to bring the entire system into balance.

Purpose or Goal: Through chakra meditation, you can improve the balance of your key chakras and bring your health and mental attitude into a more peaceful state.

6. Zazen Meditation



Zazen is a type of meditation unique to Zen Buddhism. This means sitting in Zen or sitting in concentration experiencing emptiness. Zazen is being awake but letting go, experiencing your present moment awareness without thought or story. The way to practice this is by counting each breath, to focus your attention and develop your powers of concentration. It reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and is effective in working with depression, anxiety, and anger. These are all good reasons to meditate, but ultimately Buddhists practice Zazen to realize what our true nature, which is beyond self-identity with its self-imposed limitations.

Purpose or Goal: Best for people working with depression, stress, and anger as it diminishes anxiety, and lowers blood pressure developed as a result of excessive stress.

7. Transcendental Meditation



Transcendental Meditation, introduced by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is also about repeating a holy mantra. This is a very simple, natural and effortless way of letting your mind settle down into an extremely calm and wise state of rest. It is recommended to do this twice a day in the morning and evening for twenty minutes each. While meditating, the person practicing Transcendental Meditation sits in a comfortable position with eyes closed and silently repeats a mantra. By practicing this, the ordinary thinking process is “transcended.” It’s replaced by a state of pure consciousness. In this state, the meditator achieves perfect stillness, rest, stability, order, and a complete absence of mental boundaries.

Purpose or Goal: Transcendental Meditation will make your mind-body system calm as it has a well-proven effect of letting your nervous system settle into a state of deep rest. This will automatically turn the notch down on your level of stress.

8. Loving Kindness Meditation



Loving Kindness Meditation is also known as Metta Meditation. Metta means kindness, benevolence, and goodwill. Love Kindness Meditation also leads to increased self-acceptance, a greater feeling of competence about one’s life, and increased the feeling of purpose in life. This practice of this type of meditation is started by developing loving-kindness towards yourself, then progressively

towards others and all beings. The more you practice this meditation, the more joy you will experience. It is beneficial both for selfless and self-centered people, and it will help increase your general level of happiness.

Purpose or Goal: It boosts one's ability to empathize with others. It also helps to develop positive emotions through compassion, including a more loving attitude towards oneself. This meditation is also an antidote to insomnia, nightmares, or anger issues.

Conclusion

Thousands of people have begun the journey of personal health. To achieve the maximum level of health one must eat well, exercise regularly, and improve their mental well-being. Today, when people are living a life to fulfill expectations of their loved ones, friends, and family, they are struggling to improve their mental well-being because it is the most ambiguous and hardest to see tangible results. Meditation is the best way to mentally reduce stress and develop an air of peace and tranquillity. Not every meditation method will be the best fit for you or favorite. So try these out and see which one helps you achieve that level of inner peace you are looking for. Once you have found your go-to method, incorporate that into your daily schedule to best combat the enormous levels of stress synonymous with life.



Chapter 11

Health benefits of Meditation



Meditation is relaxation and according to a scientific study deep relaxation changes our bodies on a genetic level. With meditation, the physiology undergoes a change and every cell in the body is filled with more prana (energy). This results in joy, peace, and enthusiasm as the level of prana in the body increases. Moreover, as per a recent scientific study, the genes that protect from disorders such as pain, infertility, high blood pressure and even rheumatoid arthritis are switched on if meditation is practiced regularly.

A well-balanced mind body soul connection is important to your holistic well-being. To achieve this, meditation might be the ticket. You might have heard often that “Meditation is good for your health” but you do not know how exactly and in what terms it is good. This chapter stresses on the health benefits of meditation which includes your physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being.

11.1 Physical Benefits of Meditation

There is a lot of good work that meditation and the relaxation effect is doing on your body. While relaxation techniques can be very different, their biological effects are essentially similar. Let us check out below:

1. Meditation reduces risk of heart diseases and stroke



Off lately, heart diseases have become one of the most prominent causes of deaths. Transcendental Meditation is the most effective in reducing the risk of mortality and stroke in coronary heart disease patients.

2. Meditation affects genes that control stress and immunity

After practicing meditation, the meditators develop improved mitochondrial energy production, consumption, and resiliency. This improvement helps in building a higher immunity in the body system and thus making it more resilient to stress. Apart from this, relaxation appears to boost immunity in recovering cancer patients. When practiced daily, it even reduces the risk of breast cancer recurrence.

3. Meditation reduces blood pressure



Meditation lowers blood pressure by making the body less responsive to stress hormones, in a similar way to blood pressure-lowering medication. Zen Meditation is primarily known to reduce stress and high blood pressure. Relaxation results in the formation of nitric oxide, which opens up your blood vessels, and thus reducing the risks of high blood pressure.

4. Meditation decreases inflammatory disorders

Stress leads to inflammation; a state linked to heart disease, arthritis, asthma and skin conditions such as psoriasis. The practice of mindfulness meditation produces a range of genetic and molecular effects on the participants. Meditation can help prevent and treat such symptoms by switching off the stress response. Also, reduced levels of pro-inflammatory genes correlate with faster physical recovery from a stressful situation.

5. Meditation increases Fertility



According to medical study, women are more likely to conceive during periods when they are relaxed rather than stressed. Meditation reduces the levels of stress in the body thus boosting fertility in women. Stress is also known to reduce the sperm count and motility in males, thereby suggesting relaxation may also boost male fertility.

6. Meditation help treat premenstrual syndrome and menopausal symptoms

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a condition that affects a woman's emotions, physical health, and behavior during certain days of the menstrual cycle, generally just before her menses. Serotonin levels affect mood. Serotonin is a chemical in your brain and gut that affects your moods, emotions, and thoughts. Meditation increases serotonin production that improves mood and behavior. It also ameliorates the undesirable side effects of menopause, including hot flashes which terrify women mostly in later ages.

7. Meditation may make you live longer

Telomeres are an essential part of human cells that affect how our cells age. Some forms of meditation have salutary effects on telomere length by reducing cognitive stress, stress arousal, increasing positive states of mind and hormonal factors that may promote telomere maintenance. Not only this, practicing meditation makes us happy and cheerful, and it is a well-proven fact that if a person remains happy consistently, his age increases and hence lives longer.

11.2 Mental Benefits of Meditation

Meditation cleanses and nourishes you from within and calms you, whenever you feel overwhelmed, unstable, or emotionally shut down. It makes you aware - that your inner attitude determines your happiness. If you practice meditation regularly, it can have everlasting effects. Some of them are mentioned below:

1. Meditation provides an Emotional Balance

Emotional balance means to be free of all the neurotic behavior that results from the existence of a tortured and traumatized ego. This is very hard to achieve fully, but meditation certainly is the way to cure unhealthy emotional states. When consciousness is cleansed of emotionally soaked memories, it helps to achieve a much need emotional balance.

2. Meditation improves your focus, attention, and ability to work under stress



Meditation practice generally revolves around the area of improving focus and concentration. It sharpens the mind by gaining focus and expands through relaxation. A sharp mind without expansion causes tension, anger, and frustration. The balance of a sharp mind and an expanded consciousness brings perfection, and this balance is developed by practicing meditation regularly.

3. Meditation improves information processing and decision-making

Gyrification is responsible for making the brain better at processing information, making decisions, forming memories and improving attention. As per a scientific study, it is found that long-term meditators have larger amounts of gyrification (“folding” of the cortex, which may allow the brain to process information faster) than people who do not meditate. This fact clearly defines the ability of meditation to improve the skills of faster information processing and decision making.

4. Meditation gives you mental strength, resilience and emotional intelligence

Through meditation, it becomes easy for a person to control his mind and increase the mental strength. It helps you gain clarity of thoughts thus providing a peace of mind. Meditation increases your emotional intelligence by enhancing your imagination, creativity, and ability to manage and balance the negativities around you.

5. Meditation relieves pain

Mindfulness Meditation soothes the circuits that amplify Secondary pain and this process happens in a brain scanner. In effect, mindfulness meditation teaches how to turn down the volume control on your pain. And as you do so, any anxiety, stress, and depression that you may be feeling begins to melt away too. Your body can then relaxes and begins to heal.

6. Meditation improves learning, memory, and self-awareness



Long-term practice of meditation increases grey-matter density in the areas of the brain associated with learning, memory, self-awareness, compassion, and introspection. Meditation has also been able to enhance numerous mental abilities, including rapid memory recall.

7. Meditation decreases feelings of loneliness

While practicing meditation, you tend to introspect and spend more time with yourself. This decreases your feelings of being alone and lonely. Mindfulness meditation works specifically in areas of decreasing feelings of loneliness, which further reduces the risk of morbidity, mortality, and expression of pro-inflammatory genes.

11.3 Spiritual Benefits of Meditation

Meditation doesn't belong to any caste or religion and can be practiced by anybody regardless of the faith they follow.

1. Meditation transforms you as a person

Meditation can bring a true personal transformation as by practicing it you get involved in introspection. When you talk to yourself or spend more time with yourself, you'll naturally start discovering more about yourself. But to see this

different personality in yourself, it is very important to practice it regularly. Meditation is like a seed. When you cultivate it, it blossoms.

2. Meditation helps you bring harmony



The principle of life suggests that what we get is what we give back. And Meditation brings you into a state of vastness, calmness, and joy, so this is what you emit into the environment, thus bringing harmony into your life, other's lives, and even end up in bringing harmony to nature.

3. Meditation gives you the power of healing your thoughts

While practicing meditation we disrupt the unconscious progression of thoughts and emotions by focusing on a new object of attention like Mantra (Mantra Meditation). It allows the mind to detach from its usual preoccupations and experience the spaciousness and peace within. With a regular meditation practice, life's inevitable stresses no longer have the power to throw us into chaotic mind-states, and all of our thoughts, actions, and reactions are infused with greater love, calm, and joy.

4. Meditation helps you discover the purpose of life



Meditation helps in Introspection thus helping you find the things that you are more passionate about. These provide good clues to where your life's purpose lies. Practice meditation regularly to create greater inner clarity, awareness and your core being. Remember, meditation is not a quick fix, but if you persist, you will get to taste the sweetness of its fruits for the rest of this lifetime.

5. Meditation gives you an inner silence

During meditation, you aren't forcing your mind to be quiet; you are experiencing the silence and stillness that lies beyond the background static of worry, resentment, wishful thinking, fantasy, unfulfilled hopes, and vague dreams in your head. Meditation brings us home to the peace of present-moment awareness. It gives us a direct experience of our Spirit and in the process dissolves the impurities which are preventing Spirit from shining forth in our lives.

6. Meditation helps you blend with the Highest Power



People follow different paths to connect with God. Some pay a visit to holy places; some do traditional prayers, while others chant mantras. These traditional methods work as a one-sided communication but a strong connection requires two-sided communication. For that, you have to make a relationship with God. Meditation is one of the best ways to connect with the highest power, the God. By Meditation, you can make a personal relationship with God. Just find a quiet place, close your eyes and try to relax. Calm down the thoughts running all over your mind and try to establish a conversation with God. You will feel the divinity eventually. Initially, it may take time to get connected but once you make it a habit, you won't even need a quiet place to connect with God.

7. Meditation helps to Awaken Intuition

Intuition, our sixth sense, is an incredible time-saving device! Trying to navigate life on the stored knowledge of our intellect or through the senses often leads us astray. A regular practice of meditation helps us to develop pure reason and calm feeling that awakens intuition. When the mind becomes still and the heart is open and calm, intuitive insight comes to us. Practicing meditation gives us many gifts, and intuition is one of the greatest.

Conclusion

Once imbibed into the daily routine, meditation becomes the best part of your day! Busy people from all backgrounds are grateful to pause and enjoy a refreshing few minutes of meditation each day. With regular practice, you will watch the tension and stress melt from your mind and all your niggling worries vanish. Through meditation, some people experience a little improvement, while others a lot. And there are a few whose lives turn around totally.

So, Dive deep into yourself and enrich your life with Meditation.



Chapter 12

Yoga Therapies for Common Illness



Yoga can cure almost any disease under the sky. In fact, it would be fair to say that you can stay free from all diseases if you practice Yoga asanas regularly. If you have developed any disease, the natural cure for that ailment might be there in Yoga. After all, Yoga is the collective wisdom of ages and encompasses a system of cure without modern medicines.

If you are a person who avoids popping pills for almost everything, then you must try this alternative natural care of Yoga. It doesn't need you to pay regular visits to your doctors and physicians, nor does it require you to avail any medicinal facilities like injections, medicines etc. You just need a Yoga mat, a silent atmosphere, and a devoted mind to cure almost every health problem.

12.1 Yoga Therapies for Common Illness

We value you and thus have brought for you the Yoga therapies for the most common health issues which people are facing these days.

1. Asthma



The only sustainable cure for asthma lies in Yoga. Inhalers can save your life whenever you get an asthma attack but for the long run, you need to practice pranayama and analog-vilom to get rid of this problem. Your control over asthma will let you choose how much you enjoy your life. With a potent shield like yoga, you can experience life in its totality and be carefree.

Below is the list of breathing techniques which will help you counter asthma effectively:

(a) Simple Breathing Techniques: Nadi Shodhan pranayama (Alternate nostril breathing technique)

- Begin with this pranayama (breathing technique) to calm your mind and relieving the body of accumulated stress.
- This breathing technique has a healing effect on many respiratory and circulatory problems.

(b) Kapal Bhati pranayama (Skull shining breathing technique)

- This breathing technique relaxes the mind and energizes the nervous system.
- It also clears all the nadis (energy channels) and improves blood circulation

(c) Ardha Matsyendrasana (Sitting half spinal twist)

- The Sitting half spinal twist opens the chest and improves the supply of oxygen to the lungs, thereby reducing the probability of asthma restricting you.

(d) Pawanamuktasana (Wind-relieving pose)

- This pose is good for people with asthma as it massages the abdominal organs and helps in digestion and release of gas.

2. Diabetes



Diabetes is one of the most incurable diseases in the world. You cannot really cure insulin resistance but some Yoga exercises can be helpful to control your blood sugar levels. The major benefits of a Yoga practice include:

- Keeping one healthy and preventing from getting diabetes
- Preventing a person of pre-diabetic from progressing to Type 2 Diabetes
- Helping a diabetic from developing further into a complicated disease

Few asanas to tackle diabetes better are mentioned below:

(a) Supta Matsyendrasana (Lying-down body twist)

- The Lying-down body twist massages the internal organs and improves digestion.
- This posture also exerts pressure on the abdominal organs and is hence very helpful yoga posture for people suffering from diabetes.

(b) Dhanurasana (Bow Pose)

- The Bow pose strengthens and regulates the pancreas and is highly recommended for people with diabetes.
- This yoga pose also strengthens the abdominal muscles and is a good stress and fatigue buster.

(c) Paschimottanasana (Seated forward bend)

- The Two-legged forward bend massages and tones the abdominal and pelvic organs, and helps people suffering from diabetes.
- This yoga posture helps balance the prana in the body and also calms the mind.

3. Indigestion



Indigestion is not just a disease but an epidemic among working people these days. However, you can cure indigestion with Yoga by trying the child pose or wind relieving pose. The practice of asana and kriyas every morning helps to empty out the bowels. Yoga has developed many postures and cleansing techniques for purification of the physical body. Through these simple techniques, one is aided in natural elimination of the waste and the mental complaints are relieved.

(a) Vajrasana, Diamond Pose

- Vajrasana is a simple yoga exercise which can be practiced after lunch or dinner by just sitting on the ground like shown in image for 15 – 20 minutes. It is also known as diamond pose.
- Vajrasana is one of the best yoga poses for constipation and indigestion which can be done immediately after having your meal.
- Good for curing acidity and indigestion.

(b) Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)

- Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose) is effective and beneficial for improving the function of digestion.
- This yoga pose strengthens the abdominal muscles, clean digestive tract and cures constipation and indigestion problems naturally.

(c) Halasana (Plough Pose)

- Halasana is known as Plough pose which strengthens the back muscles and gives flexibility.
- It cures indigestion and constipation as well as reduces stress.
- It also stimulates the abdominal organs and digestion problems.

4. Migraine



Migraine is commonly known as a one-sided headache. It is a form of a vascular headache caused by vasodilatation (enlargement of blood vessels) that gives rise to a release of chemicals from nerve fibers that coil around the large arteries of the brain. Enlargement of these blood vessels stretches the nerves that coil around them and causes the nerves to release chemicals. The chemicals cause inflammation, pain, and further enlargement of the artery. The increasing enlargement of the arteries magnifies the pain.

Yoga is one of the best remedies to treat and prevent migraine. Progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, and Yoga can make a big difference in our lifestyles to tackle and prevent the attack. The practice of asanas can give the ultimate relaxation to the body and rest to the mind. Regular practice of Asanas reduces stress, prevent migraines and reduce medications.

(a) Hastapadasana (Standing Forward Bend)

- The Standing Forward bend invigorates the nervous system by increasing blood supply and also calms the mind.

(b) Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)

- The Bridge pose calms the brain and reduces anxiety.

(c) Shishuasana (Child pose)

- The Child pose calms down the nervous system and effectively reduces the pain.

(d) Marjariasana (Cat stretch)

- The Cat stretch improves blood circulation and also relaxes the mind.

5. Arthritis



Arthritis is a disease that causes severe joint pain and unfortunately incurable. If neglected, it could affect the sufferer significantly, if not now, in future. But yoga can help control the amount of pain caused due to arthritis. It is the best to overcome Arthritis. As asanas are gentle in nature, they generate physiological and psychological benefits for the sufferer. Some simple physical movement to the joints can improve blood circulation and increase the range of mobility in the area.

(a) Veerbhadrasana or Warrior Pose

- Strengthens the arms, legs and lower back.
- Is extremely beneficial for frozen shoulders.

(b) Vrikshasana or Tree Pose

- Strengthens the legs and back.

- Improves balance.

(c) Trikonasana or Triangle pose

- Very effective for back pain and sciatica.
- Stretches and strengthens the spine, arms, and chest.
- Improves physical equilibrium.

6. Depression



It is not unusual that sometimes we are under the weather – feeling low and either unwilling or feeling demoralized to do anything. Some experience this feeling intensely over a relatively long period – weeks, months or even years – and without any apparent reasons either. Stress can be a major factor in depression. Yoga helps in uplifting one's mood and relieves stress. In yoga therapy for depression, one learns to stabilize and manage the mood. If you don't want to be dependent on anti-depressants and sleeping pills, try yoga remedies mentioned below:

(a) Practice the following Yoga Asanas and relieve your stress of mind

- Dhanurasana (Bow Pose)
- Matsyasana (Fish Pose)
- Janu Shirsasana (One-Legged Forward Bend)
- Setubandhasana (Bridge Pose)

(b) Breathe right with pranayama to relieve anxiety

- Taking your attention to the breath can help free the mind of the unnecessary clutter of thoughts that breed anxiety.
- Kapal Bhati Pranayama (Skull-Shining Breathing Technique), Bhastrika Pranayama, Nadi Shodhan Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing) is effective in releasing stress from the system (where the exhalation is longer than the inhalation)

(c) Meditate to enjoy the gift of a relaxed mind

- Meditation is an excellent technique to relax a distracted mind, give you a sense of calm and peace, and also observe with daily practice how your mind works to keep you involved in small, petty things around.
- It also helps you not worry too much or get anxious about the unknown future.

7. PCOS (Poly Cystic Ovaries)



PCOS is one of the epidemics that is attacking young women these days. The symptoms are irregular periods and it can even lead to infertility. The science of yoga works at levels much more subtle and deeper than just the physical body level. Yoga helps release deeply stored stress in the system, which can help improve PCOS symptoms.

Yoga Asanas (Yoga postures) designed for PCOS help open up the pelvic area and promote relaxation and pranayamas (breathing exercises) are powerful techniques that help calm the mind.

(a) Butterfly Pose

- Butterfly Pose can be very helpful in PCOS.
- Don't flap your legs too much; instead, try holding the posture for long.

(b) Supta Badhakonasana

- This works just like the Butterfly Pose, this time lying down. This is what makes it extremely relaxing.
- To enhance the experience, play some soft music and place cushions under your hip. For beginners, it is a good idea to use cushion support while doing this posture.

(c) Chakki Chalanasana

- Chakki Chalanasana (moving the grinding wheel) is a very simple exercise with several benefits.
- It helps massage the liver, kidneys, pancreas, uterus and the reproductive organs.

(d) Shavasana (Corpse Pose)

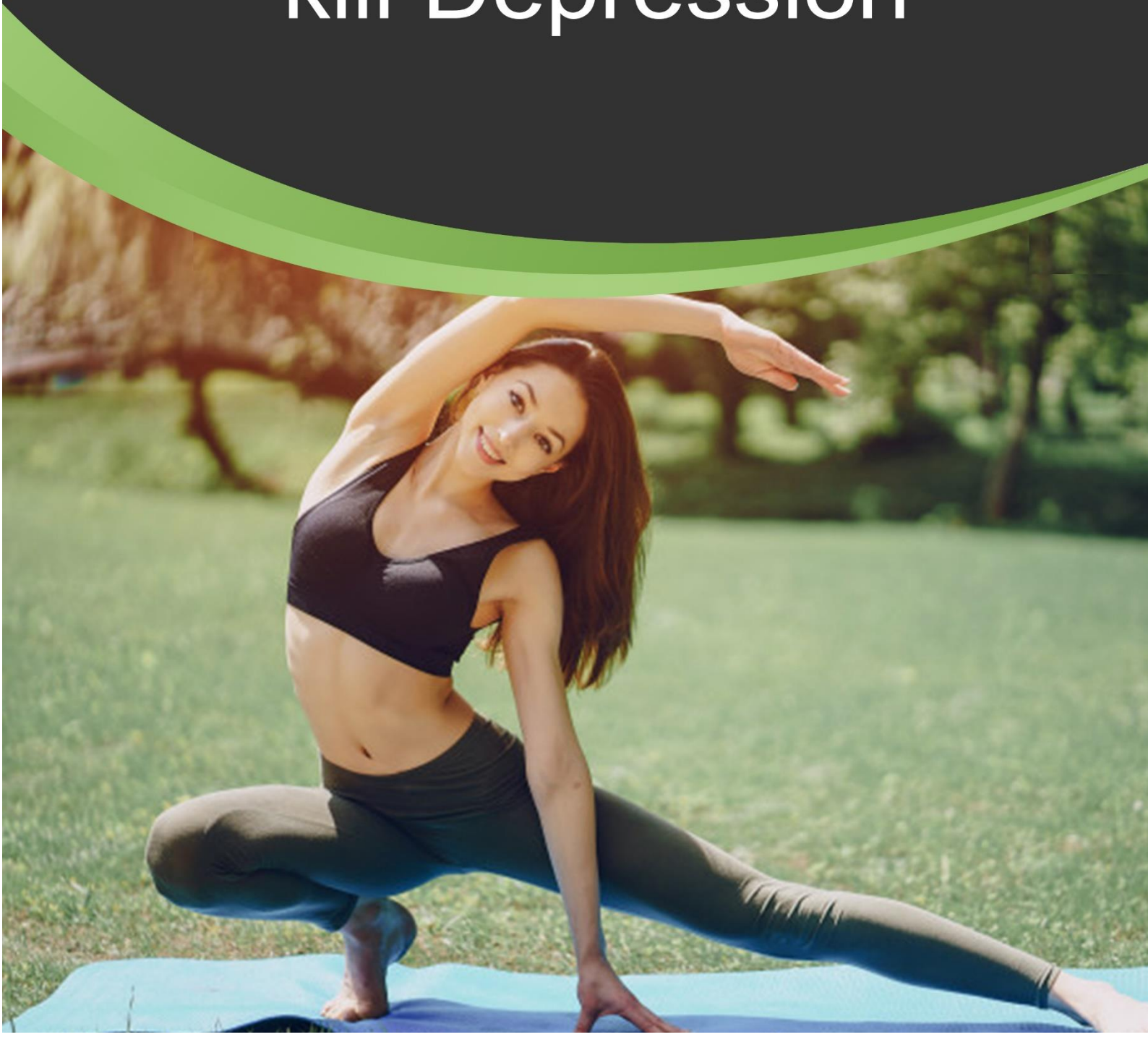
- Corpse Pose is another useful posture to try for PCOS patients.
- In PCOS, the more you relax, the better you feel and this posture will help you completely relax at the end of your yoga session.

Conclusion

Yoga therapy is most commonly used to manage a broad range of chronic disease conditions. Chronic conditions are those that are long-lasting and that do not heal quickly or of their own accord. It is sometimes used as an adjunct to modern medical treatment and in some cases can be the primary therapeutic modality. Yoga therapy has been found to be effective in the treatment and management of many diseases, just give it a try to see the difference.

Chapter 13

Yoga - Exclusive to kill Depression



Does yoga help with depression?

Before answering this question, we need to know what exactly depression is, and how does it impact your life.

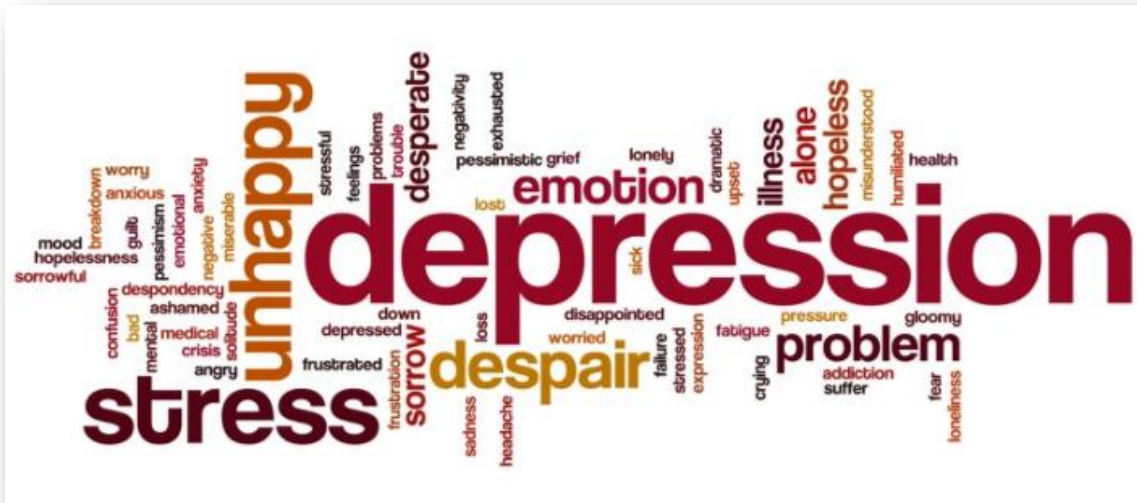
13.1 What Is Depression?



Depression is an illness that affects your brain. It is your reaction to something sad, loss of someone, or dejection. When these feelings aggravate and become intense, it leads to a medical condition called clinical depression.

Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home.

13.2 What Causes Depression?



Depression is more than just a low mood – it's a serious condition that affects your physical and mental health. While we all feel sad, moody or low from time to time, some people experience these feelings intensely, for long periods of time (weeks, months or even years) and sometimes without any apparent reason.

When you get emotionally attached to something over a period, and it doesn't exist anymore, it leaves a gap, and depression takes over to cope with the loss. Genetics, fluctuation in the hormone levels, some medical conditions, post-surgery reaction, and high-stress levels also cause depression. It is a common yet severe problem that needs to be tackled before it gets out of hand.

13.3 Common Symptoms of Depression

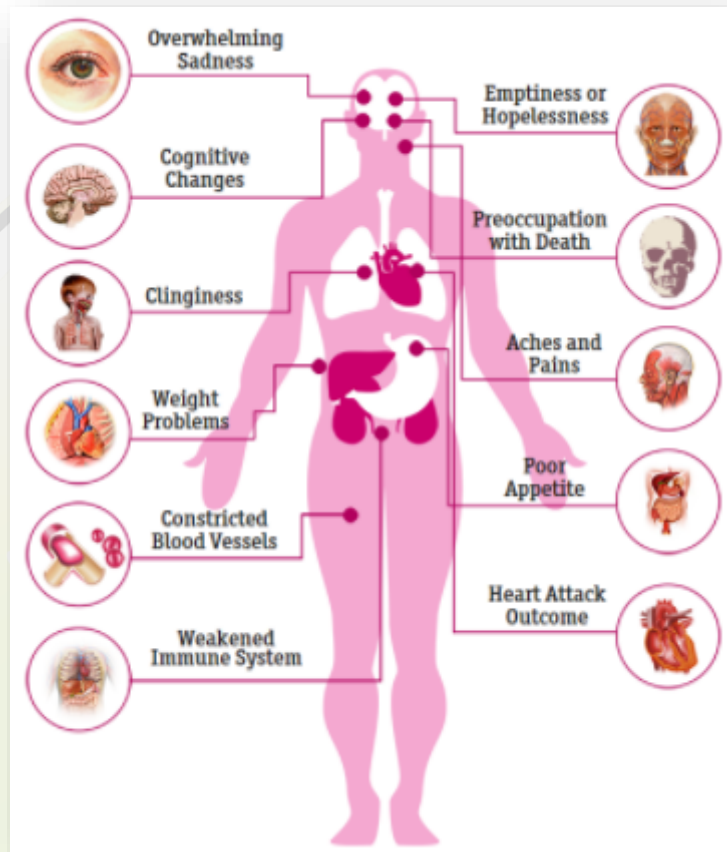


People often confuse sadness with depression. Thus, it becomes highly necessary to know the symptoms and traits of Depression. Most common ones are:

1. Feeling of guilt, sadness and worthlessness regularly
2. Reduced levels of concentration at work
3. Indecisiveness
4. Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
5. Loss of energy or increased fatigue
6. Increase in purposeless physical activity (e.g., hand-wringing or pacing) or slowed movements and speech (actions observable by others)
7. The hobbies and activities which you were passionate about once now seem to be unappealing and boring
8. You think about death and suicide more often
9. A feeling of instability and fidgety takes over
10. You tend to gain weight or lose it drastically – Loss of appetite!

Feeling sad or anxious at times is a normal part of life, but if these feelings last more than two weeks they could be symptoms of depression. Depression, if left untreated, can interrupt your day-to-day life and cause a ripple effect of additional symptoms.

13.4 Effects of Depression on the Overall Body System



Depression is technically a mental disorder, but it also affects your physical health and well-being. It impacts your body and mind system in a severe manner. Check out some of them below:

1. Trouble with Memory and Decision-Making

Cognitive changes such as trouble remembering things or difficulties with making decisions occur with depression. These are more common in older adults suffering from depression.

2. Insomnia

Depression mostly keeps you awake during the night. This is because of the thoughts rolling over your mind and heart as a result of depression, which affects sleep.

3. Preoccupation with Death

Depression mostly causes a preoccupation with hurting a person himself/herself. It increases the risk of suicides and untimely deaths.

4. Risk of Heart Attack

People who are depressed are likely to die following a heart attack. The reason is constantly engaging their heart with thoughts, feelings, and actions which are prone to strike them directly leading to problems like cardiac arrests and heart strokes.

5. Constricted Blood Vessels

Depression and stress cause the blood vessels to constrict, raising the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

6. Increased Pain Sensitivity

Headache and other body pains affect a person with depression. For people suffering from depression, the pain doesn't ease with medication.

7. Weakened Immune System

Depression weakens the ability to fight off diseases. This includes minor illness like a common cold, flu and also the major and serious ones like cardiovascular diseases.

8. Low Interest in Sex

Being depressed causes losing interest in sex and other physical activities which were once interesting. Taking antidepressants mostly affects the libido.

13.5 Yoga as a Cure for Depression



Yoga is one of the best ways to lighten your mood and keep depression at bay. Yoga poses increase blood circulation to the brain and enable the production of the mood-elevating hormones.

1. Exercise increases serotonin production.
2. Yoga is an exercise that can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.
3. Practicing Yoga may help improve your energy level, pain tolerance, and self-esteem.

Yoga is a physical exercise that involves different body poses, breathing techniques, and meditation. The therapy may help with depression and your symptoms, such as difficulty concentrating or loss of energy.

13.5.1 How does Yoga Therapy work?

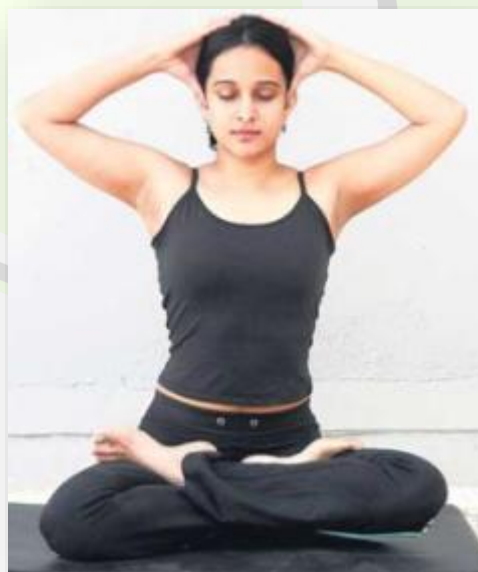
Yoga therapy can be very powerful in the treatment of depression. Even if Yoga isn't your forte, the combination of meditation and physical movement provide two important elements for relieving depression. Meditation helps bring a person into the present moment and allows them to clear their minds. Controlled and focused movements also help strengthen the body-mind connection. Breathing exercises are effective in reducing depressive symptoms. It is also helpful as the exercise focuses on deep, controlled breathing.

1. Improves Mood and Relaxation



As an exercise, Yoga is a natural way to increase serotonin production. Serotonin production plays an important role in the treatment of depression and inculcating in happiness. As per studies and medical research, it is known that people with depression have lower serotonin levels. Yoga is also especially helpful because of its gentle, calming, and fluid nature. Each pose is flexible, so people of all levels can practice. Yoga emphasizes on breathing, concentration, and smooth movement. It also encourages you to focus on positive images to calm the body and mind.

2. Reduces Stress and Anxiety



Yoga also increases the heart rate variability (HRV), or change in time between heartbeats, by increasing the relaxation response over the stress response in the body. A high HRV means that your body is better at self-monitoring or adapting, particularly to stress.

Yoga also reduces resting heart rate, lowers blood pressure, eases breathing and increases pain tolerance.

3. Brings Stability and Calms the mind

Pranayama and Yoga bring stability, calms the mind, improves blood circulation and cures depression stress and anxiety. Some yoga poses like Halasana, Sarvanga Asana, Shava Asana are very important to cure depression stress and anxiety.

4. Brings Positivity

Yoga and pranayama play an important role in your life to become healthy. Seven Pranayamas are very important which are related to breathing exercise. Pranayama is effective to remove the bad toxin from our body and give positive energy.

13.5.2 Yoga Poses to Cure Depression



The practice of Yoga doesn't have any adverse side effects, which make it a better option as compared to other medication for depression. Some yoga poses to fight depression are mentioned below. Try them regularly to notice significant changes.

1. Balasana (Child Pose)



Balasana helps calm your brain and relieves stress and anxiety. It gently stretches your lower back and hips, enabling your body to relax. Peace and calm prevail over your entire being, helping you deal with your depression better.

2. Sethu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)



Sethu Bandhasana strengthens the back muscles and relieves a tired back. It helps you relax and works wonders for people suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression. It opens up your heart, making you feel light and at ease.

3. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog Pose)



Urdhva Mukha Svanasana can easily cure mild fatigue and depression. It has an overall rejuvenating effect on your body, and all the stress trapped in your back will vanish.

4. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)



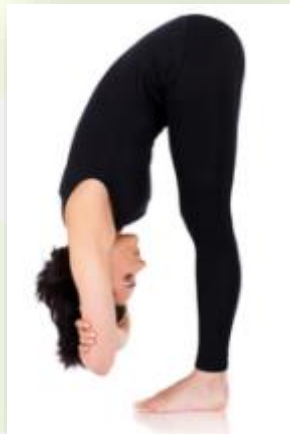
Adho Mukha Svanasana enables fresh blood to flow into your body. It stretches the neck and cervical spine, releasing the stress in them, thereby reducing anxiety and calming your being.

5. Halasana (Plow Pose)



Halasana reduces the strain on your back and enhances your posture. It calms your brain, gives it a good stretch, and reduces stress. It keeps headaches and insomnia at bay. This is one of the best calming poses for your nervous system.

6. Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold Pose)



Uttanasana relieves tension in your back, shoulders, and neck and improves the functioning of your nervous system. It calms you and reduces the anxiety levels.

7. Savasana (Corpse Pose)



Savasana rejuvenates you and helps your body relax. It reduces blood pressure and lets the effects of the previous poses to sink in better. Finally, after all the mind and body invigorating poses, Savasana will give you all the rest and scope to heal.

All the above-mentioned poses will help relieve the emotional scars and trauma deeply ingrained in your physical and psychic body.

Conclusion

When you practice Yoga, you pay attention to your body. It makes you feel whole and connected. Yoga offers support and solace and the ability to live in the moment. The unique mind-body approach of Yoga is more and more becoming the choice to fight depression. It is holistic and long-lasting without any side effects.

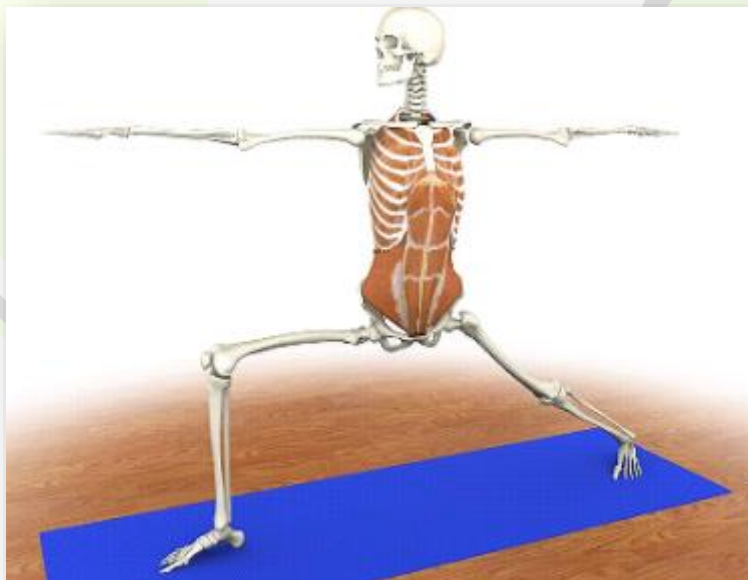
Chapter 14

The Future of Yoga As a Medicine



We are in crisis. Yoga is here now because we desperately need it in our lives. It isn't a mistake that Yoga is here now or accidental that more and more people are practicing yoga and more and more people are adding to the stream. Yoga is popping up everywhere and will continue to do so. In schools, hospitals, corporations, churches, the military, in prisons—everywhere. We are moving towards a quantum leap in human consciousness and although Yoga isn't the only way to become more conscious, it's one way and a pretty good one. As more people are helped, healed and awakened by the practices, they will bring others onto the path simply because that is what happens—we feel better and we want to share with others the benefits we have received.

The practice of medicine will change more in coming 20 years than it has in last 200 years. This change is inevitable due to an explosion in knowledge and fast dissemination of this knowledge. The technological revolution has made communication a possibility even with a click. Much of this change will be brought about by our appreciation and acceptance of past wisdom. The accumulated wealth of knowledge from ancient traditions like Yoga is finding acceptance finally, but reservations still remain. Now that science has started accepting the dynamic play of life at the subatomic level and has progressed to create life in the lab (scientist have created a synthetic cell recently), it becomes pertinent more than ever before to revisit our approach towards the ancient philosophies like yoga. A thing that we do not understand as of now is called philosophical; once our intellect graduates to understanding the same people call it science.



Yoga is such an epitome of accumulated wisdom from our past that has helped the human existence, withstand the traits of deleterious evolutionary pressures. Yoga is seen not only as a set of esoteric exercises but also as a part of the oriental culture.

It's inherent, non-invasiveness and harmlessness emanates from the test of time and voluntary integration. Biofeedback therapy, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, and hypnotherapy etc. are fragmented approaches to understand issues which have been addressed in totality by Yoga for centuries.

14.1 The Future of Yoga in Medicine

Yoga is at an interesting crossroads. At the turn of the 20th century, the Yoga industry was non-existent, while there was an amazing depth of knowledge within the community of practicing Yogis of the time. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Yoga market is global with millions of practitioners, but yet there remains very little knowledge about this precious discipline.

1. Modern Yoga



The teachings of Yoga are normally rooted deeply in philosophical teachings, and form a way of life, rather than merely a set of exercises. However, modern-day Yoga is primarily associated with physical exercise and is devoid of other important aspects that make it a holistic experience, rather than just a performance. Sound Yoga principles exist in the important classical texts that define the entire array of Yogic tools and guidance on how to integrate them as a way of life.

When Yoga made its way into the Western world in the twentieth century, the teachings were brought through Indian teachers who still had access to these teachings that connected Yoga to its roots. However, with each passing generation, less and less of this knowledge was passed down and the practitioners of today are very distant from Yoga's original roots, if not completely cut off from them. Most of the Yoga training programs today fail to incorporate this vast knowledge and mainly focus the education on learning a set of postures and understanding them through the bias of modern medicine or physiotherapy.

This is an unsustainable and dangerous path. Just like a tree cut off from its roots will not survive, Yoga cut off from its roots will face a similar calamity.

Modern medicine as we know it did not exist in India, or anywhere in the world for that matter when Yogis were developing these practices. Yogis understood the human body within their own framework and evolved tools based on that understanding. Developed through careful and constant observation and extraordinary intuition, the tools of Yoga use more than just the musculoskeletal framework of the body, unlike Physical Therapy which focuses on body mechanics. Modern Yoga tools involve all aspects of our being, taking into account our breathing patterns, emotions, and intellect as well.

2. Yoga as a Medicine



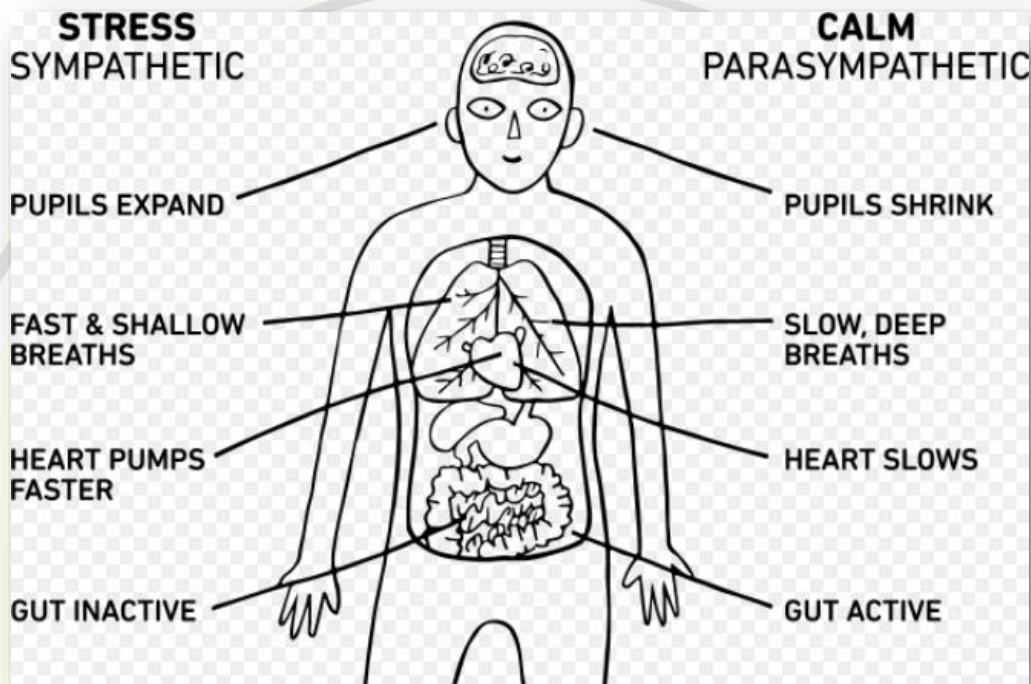
Yoga Therapy—or as we call it Yoga As Medicine— is the selective use of various yoga tools — such as poses, breathing techniques, relaxation exercises and meditation, as well as dietary and lifestyle advice — to help people with virtually any health condition, physical or psychological. Because people's health and fitness vary, we often modify poses or use props to make the practices safe and effective. Yoga therapy can be used by itself or as an adjunct to any conventional or alternative medical treatment.

The physical postures and meditative practices of yoga developed through thousands of years of intent study of the body's responses to particular postures and meditations. Many patients have already caught on to yoga as a form of mental and physical self-care and preventive health. If we adequately understand yoga, we can seize an opportunity to encourage the healthy thoughts and behaviors that our patients gain through yoga and to build upon them.

3. What should future physicians know about yoga?

Yoga works by re-tuning the nervous system so that it is better able to respond to stress by shifting between activation of the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems as needed. Yoga effectively induces the relaxation response via the hypothalamic-adrenal-pituitary axis. It lowers levels of the stress hormones

cortisol and monoamine oxidase and increases serotonin, endorphin and enkephalin levels which collectively improve mood. Yoga has also been shown to increase the frequency of brainwaves associated with relaxation and with unconscious memory, dreams, and emotions. Not only can yoga induce parasympathetic-mediated relaxation but it also includes techniques like backbends and certain pranayama breathing exercises that stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, perhaps toning its response.



Overall, yoga causes the body to produce fewer catecholamines by lowering limbic stimulation. There are many benefits to mitigating the stress response. First, this leads to increased immunity. Like other meditative practices, yoga has been shown to increase immune function in people with weakened immune responses and decreased overactivity of the immune system in people with autoimmune dysfunction. Brain imaging has also shown that meditation techniques like yoga actually decrease pain signals between the thalamus and the cerebral cortex. This is good news for patients with chronic back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoarthritis, to name a few.

4. Yoga as a technology for Life Transformation



Although medical knowledge is constantly being refined, the basics of what we know about getting and staying healthy haven't changed much in recent years. Just about everybody knows you shouldn't smoke, and that you should eat lots of fruits and green vegetables, and whole grains, keep your stress levels from spiraling out of control. The difficult part isn't knowing what to do, it's actually doing it.

Yoga offers something which doctors and other public health authorities are missing: a way for people to implement the changes they want to make and need to make.

With advances in understanding and technology, Science is now talking about "neuroplasticity". The brain, is plastic, meaning it has the capacity to change. When a new action is performed, brain cells called neurons form new connections, and the more frequently you do it, the stronger the neural links become. This is the neurological explanation of "samskaras" in Yoga.

14.2 What is needed at our End to grow Yoga?

We need to learn how to get people to change behavior, because so many of the big diseases are all lifestyle-related. At the heart of big, epidemic conditions like heart disease and diabetes really are behavioral, lifestyle issues. These are conditions where people need to change their habits more than they need to take the medicine. There's plenty of medicine on the market but that's not really solving the problem. That's just pushing back the symptoms.

Medicine is great at changing chemistry, but it is lousy at changing behavior. And bodyworkers movement therapists and yoga teachers may not administer things through the mouth or through needles—but we're wonderful at changing behavior! We have to get better at it. But this is basically our realm: How to change behaviour or to change movement, which is behaviour.

We're just starting to really examine this potential now. Yoga was very small until quite recently. On that note, to get yoga the seat at the table that it deserves, yoga trainers need to learn the language of anatomy. If yoga people are just talking about energy and how everything is connected, then they really won't get a seat at the table, because anatomy is the language that everybody speaks. We should try to bring orthopaedists and physiotherapists and athletic trainers and yoga people and body workers all to the same table and develop something that is very strong and very powerful.

14.3 Curb the “Lifestyle Disease” with Yoga tips

In the future, every-day medicine may not include a trip to the doctor or pharmacy. Instead, each of us will be endowed with all the information we need to not only eradicate many common illnesses but if they should arise, we will know just what to do to bring ourselves back to health.

In the past decade, we've seen a steep rise in conditions of 'Lifestyle Disease'. Lifestyle Disease could be categorized as any condition that is brought on through repeated habits over time that alters the healthy function of the body. Illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, indigestion, gout, obesity, vascular disease and many more, could become rare if we heed the influx of scientific research and good old common-sense currently making its way through our information highways.



So what might the proper lifestyle choices be? Two big ones, diet, and exercise. Most of us have by now heard that good food means real food. Real food is unprocessed, in its original state as it came out of the earth. Eat real food and your genes will reward you with less disease. Movement is another important health-enhancing activity that can have a strong influence upon gene expression. In repeated studies exercise has been shown to improve memory and mood, reduce stress and strengthen the immune system.

This is real medicine! Food and exercise are medicine and a time is fast approaching where the best doctors will be the ones that suggest you eat real food and move your body --without once touching the prescription pad. The best doctors will be the ones that encourage you to get up out of your office chair and have a brisk walk in the sunshine with a friend before enjoying a whole-food lunch laden with fresh vegetables, lean protein and fresh clean water. Our friends and family will remind us of the cure because everyone will simply understand the recipe for the needed lifestyle corrections. We will still have a use for those doctors for things like broken bones, stitches, the occasional communicable disease, and research etc. But for the diseases of faulty lifestyle, we will be responsible only to ourselves for the cure.

Conclusion

There are many good things about yoga, and many people are benefiting from all kinds of yoga out there. This future belongs to each one of us, and it's in our hands to keep progressing. We have the ability to make the benefits stronger and more predictable, for more people, more of the time. As with the rest of our being and healing practices, we also have the ability to drop the negative side-effects. Alongside the good, there are of course areas where yoga can do better – where it can evolve and adapt to where we are now. Part of this comes from yoga being asked to do what it wasn't designed to do. And part is grounded in elements of the philosophy that don't translate well into modern practice.

Chapter 15

Special Advice for Apprentice - The Beginners



Starting out in Yoga is like starting a new relationship. It's exciting, it makes us feel amazing and it can be more than a little bit addictive! Like most new things we learn, the beginning stages of yoga are really important because this is when we lay the foundation and form habits that can really shape the way we practice.

Beginning Yoga practitioners are just as likely to feel the joy that comes from Yoga as are their more experienced comrades. But beginners also face a pesky collection of obstacles. For one thing, the vocabulary of Yoga can be difficult. Beginners need empathy.

Among the most difficult challenges for beginning, Yoga individuals are creating a home yoga practice. For that, a Yoga practitioner must choose from a growing list of techniques and arrange the selections to fit into a never-quite-adequate length of time. The practices mushroom as you progress from session to session, and it can be difficult to keep up with them all. It can be even more difficult to measure the relative significance of the practices or to make sure that when you are doing them at home you are doing them correctly.

There is also the question of faith. Yoga prospers when the practitioner practices with faith. Beginners often do have faith in the value of Yoga, which helps them through periods of doubt and frustration. With the passing of time, however, beginning practitioners must make the journey from blind to reasoned faith. And this means learning to own the practices yourself.

15.1 Yoga Tips and Best Practices for Beginners



To sum up – there are a lot of challenges which are faced by the beginners while practicing Yoga, so, we have researched and brought some tips and best practices for you to follow in order to make this beginning smooth, easy and convenient:

1. Create a comfortable spot for your yoga practice



If you have an extra room in our house which can be 24*7 ready for Yoga, it would be great and much helpful.

Having your yoga mat unrolled and out all the time is certainly inviting. Most of us, however, have to be more flexible and create a space when we want to practice. Try and find a spot where it's peaceful and quiet, with as much space around you as possible. An empty piece of wall can be handy too since the wall is a great prop. If you like, it can be nice and even helpful to create some atmosphere with a candle or an incense stick. You can do yoga anywhere as long as you have enough space around you without the risk of bumping into tables, chairs, etc.

Create the best space you can and enjoy your practice!

2. Choose your Yoga style

What are you going to do when you are on your mat? The first question to ask is... "What do my body and mind need?"

You need to introspect and watch your body to understand what does it need? Restorative Yoga to quiet your body and mind, or Bikram to revitalize your energy levels.

The more you do yoga, the more you learn the effects of different practices and the more you learn to recognize what it is your body and mind need at different times. The way you make the Yoga session perfect for you is through practicing with full awareness, with as little resistance as possible. If there is a part you don't like, breathe through it and observe your reactions. Remember that how you react on the mat seeps through in how you react in daily life. In

daily life, you will also come across situations you don't like and choose not to change or are unable to change.

In time, your yoga practice on your mat will teach you to surrender more and more to what is. You will learn to stop resisting what is and to stop trying to change things. Next, you will be able to apply that perspective more in your life off the mat. The peace that comes from being able to accept what is will be great.

3. Don't skip sessions: Practice Regularly

Even practicing Yoga once a week is beneficial! Three times a week is great, every day is great too. What works for you? If it's very important for you to achieve goals, then it is much better to set a goal of practicing three times a week, being able to do it and feeling proud of yourself, than to set a goal to practice every day and feeling bad if you do only three times a week. A feeling of failure usually just makes you skip practices even more. So, be honest, set realistic goals, and do what you can. A 10-minute yoga practice is still a practice and definitely counts.

4. Enjoy your Practice



Don't overdo it; if you don't enjoy your yoga practice you will never keep it up. It should be something you look forward to doing. Maybe try another style of Yoga or place if you feel like Yoga is becoming a chore.

5. Be safe and Prevent Injury

This is one tip with no shortcuts. Always watch your boundaries and especially be mindful of your body's vulnerable areas. Particularly vulnerable areas

are knees, hips, spine, and neck. If you feel any painful sensations, adjust, soften, and come out of the pose if you need to. Don't force or push. Warm up your body properly before attempting more advanced poses, and keep checking in if it feels okay to be in a pose. Be especially mindful during transitions between poses or when moving in or out of poses - these are moments of a potential risk of injury because we tend to pay less attention to our alignment.

6. Keep your Yoga Accessories handy and ready-to-use



All you really need is a yoga mat, preferably non-slip. The yoga mat market is huge but it's worth paying a little more for a good quality mat that suits your needs and will last a long time. Blocks are a great addition which can be used for general strength exercises. Putting a yoga block in between your legs or holding one in your hands can introduce an additional element of resistance during strength training, by making the exercise more intense and satisfying. A bolster is also nice to have to create relaxation, help soften a posture, or aid in opening the body, all basically to provide comfort.

Accessories and even a yoga mat are by no means a prerequisite to practice: but you, as a beginner can be at ease and comfort if you have some of them. In case you do not have them, just be creative and replace them with other objects, but remember – No excuses!

7. Do what makes you feel good

If you find yourself in a pose that feels super unnatural, awkward, or downright painful, stop doing that pose. There should be no suffering in yoga. Remember that this is a treat for your body, not a punishment.

8. Know your breath



The breath is the most important aspect of yoga. It quite literally sustains human life, as it carries both oxygen and prana (the energetic life force) through our system. Maintaining an awareness of your breath as you practice can lead to a deeper connection between body and mind and can result in greater feelings of clarity and calmness. The other awesome thing about learning how to connect with your breath is that you instantly have a tool to bring you back to the present moment, whether you are on the mat or not.

9. Dress-up Comfortably



Wear comfortable clothing while practicing yoga both at home and outdoors. Also, avoid wearing belts or excessive jewelry as it could get in the way of your yoga practice.

Ensure that your Yoga pants are stretchable, comfort and light to enable you to stretch while performing different stretching poses. The stuff of your clothes should be such that it absorbs and wipes off the excess sweat from your body.

10. Stay Light



It is advised to practice on an empty stomach or at least 2-3 hours after your last meal. Also, it's advised to have at least three to four liters of water during the day as it will help you to flush the toxins that are released during your yoga practice, out of the body.

11. Challenge your limits

Do only as much as you comfortably can and then just stretch a bit more (to improve body flexibility). Remember to use the breath as a reference point - when it is light and long, then the muscles begin to relax; but when the breath is jagged or uneven, it means you have over-exerted.

Going slightly beyond your comfort zone will keep the yoga practice interesting and will add a spark of a challenge as you progress and adopt new yoga asanas.

12. Relax to Recharge



As you complete your yoga asana practice, don't be in a great hurry to get up and start moving about with the tasks lined up for the day. It is a good idea to lie down in Yoga Nidra for a few minutes, as it helps cool down the body and consolidate the energy produced through yoga asana practice. Yoga Nidra is also beneficial for completely relaxing the mind and body after the yoga workout.

You will be able to experience the subtler and deeper benefits of yoga in due time only if you stay regular with your practice. Yoga encompasses yoga asanas, timeless ancient philosophy, pranayamas (breathing techniques) and meditations, which take you beyond the body level, offering a deeper spiritual experience.

Conclusion

To start with, promote deep listening to the basics. Up your fitness practice and even your yoga workout by connecting or reconnecting with action and alignment. Get the most out of your time on your mat by connecting with your energy and awareness. Cultivate deep listening each time you show up on your mat.

Yoga is all about you, so there's literally nobody to compete with! Yep, it's human nature to want to compete with others particularly at those super bendy people who can do the advanced postures BUT there's a difference between mild curiosity and non-useful comparison. Yoga is not a competition. Stay focused on your reason for practicing and forget about everyone and everything else around you.

Conclusion

If you haven't yet made up your mind to start with Yoga, do it right away!

In a culture in which we rush from one day to the next, constantly trying to change our health, our body, or our emotions, or to plan our future, yoga opens up the possibility of connecting to what we already have — to who we already are. Yoga offers self-reflection, the practice of kindness and self-compassion, and continued growth and self-awareness. It can increase your flexibility, improve your balance, and decrease your cholesterol.

While most people intuitively get that yoga reduces depression and anxiety, most people — even physicians and scientists—are typically surprised to find out that yoga changes the brain.

Not only does it have the physical and the mental benefits, it transforms you as a person. It helps you in attaining greater happiness and joy.

Yoga can help you get fit for life. It helps you deal with stress, pick up your child, control your dog, carry groceries, or work in your garden. It also can help to prevent or ease back pain and muscle or joint injury, and give you self-reliance and self-esteem.

Yet, one of the most important benefits of any yoga routine isn't physical — it's the quieting of the mind. The bottom line is learning to pay attention. You fine-tune your attention, beginning with the body, and then moving to the mind. As you get deeper into your practice over the years, you start to see the mental and spiritual benefits.

Yoga can change the heart — but we're not just talking about blood pressure.

“Fitness is not about being better than somebody else; it's about being better than what you used to be...”

Stay Healthy, Stay Fit!!!