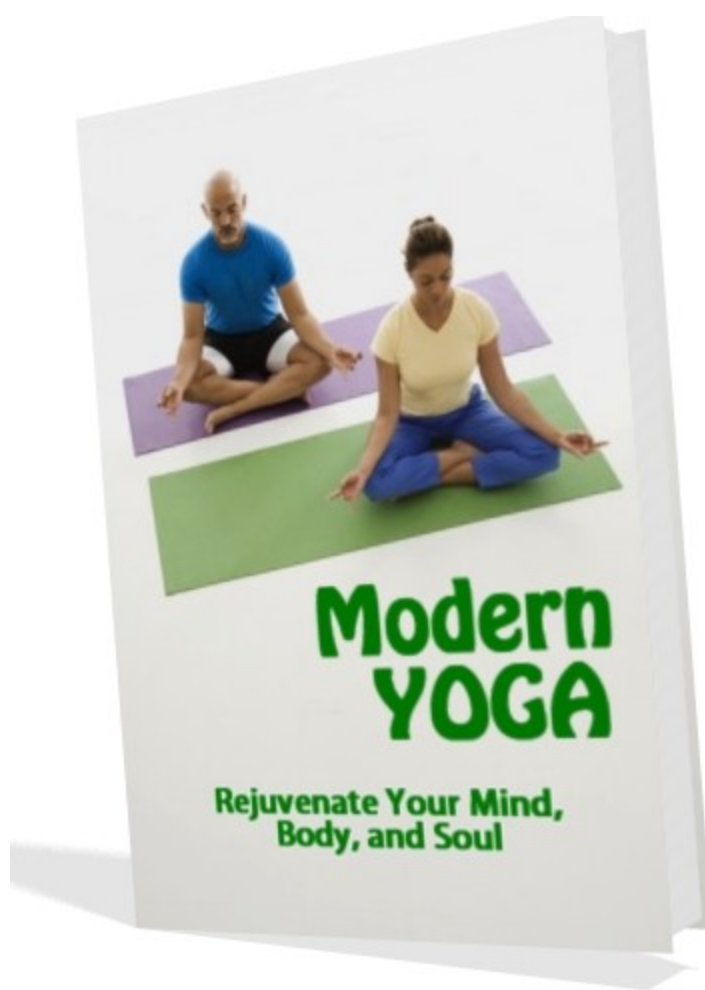


Modern YOGA

Rejuvenate Your Mind, Body, and Soul



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INTRODUCTION

When one mentions “yoga”, many images may be conjured up. Perhaps you get an image of flower children from the 60’s sitting in a circle with their legs in impossible positions chanting “Ohm” around a huge candle in a poorly lit room. Although that is not the case, Yoga is an ancient art that has been practiced for centuries. Over the years, it has risen in popularity as a way to stay fit, get in touch with one’s inner self, and keep a balance of sanity in a sometimes insane world.

While yoga did come to popularity in the 60’s with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who popularized Transcendental Meditation (TM) because of his affiliation with the Beatles, yoga practitioners have brought the ancient practice to the forefront of wellness in recent years.

Many scholars believe that yoga dates back over 5,000 years to the beginning of human civilization. They believe that yoga grew out of Stone Age Shamanism, because of the cultural similarities between Modern Hinduism and Mehrgarh, a Neolithic settlement in what is now Afghanistan. In fact, much of Hindu ideas, rituals, and symbols of today appear to have their roots in this shamanistic culture of Mehrgahr.

Early Yoga and archaic shamanism had much in common as both sought to transcend the human condition. The primary goal of shamanism was to heal members of the community and act as religious mediators. Archaic Yoga was also community oriented, as it attempted to discern the cosmic order through inner vision, then to apply that order to daily living.

Later, Yoga evolved into a more inward experience, and Yogis focused on their individual enlightenment and salvation.

Yoga is the most diversified spiritual practice in the world. Crossing over many cultures (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and the West), Yoga also extends over multiple languages such as Hindi, Tibetan, Bengali,

Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakit, Marathi and Pali. The Yogic tradition continues to proliferate and spread its message of peace to this very day.

There are many different places that offer yoga classes – gyms, wellness centers, even the local YMCA. But you don't have to join a class to practice yoga. It is just as easily done in your home, or even at your desk, while at work.

Yoga can help bring you inner peace when you are stressed out. It can even help relieve the pain of headaches, backaches, and menstrual cramps. As studies continue to reveal yoga's many health benefits, this centuries old Eastern philosophy is fast becoming the new fitness soul mate for workout enthusiasts.

Contemporary devotees range from high-powered execs trying to keep hearts beating on a healthy note to image-conscious Hollywood stars striving for sleek physiques. Even prominent athletes are adding yoga to their training regime to develop balanced, injury-free muscles and spines.

Yet to applaud yoga for its physical benefits alone would only diminish what this entire system has to offer as a whole. By practicing yoga on a regular basis, you may be surprised to find that you're building much more than a strong, flexible body.

Initially, the sole purpose of practicing yoga was to experience spiritual enlightenment. In Sanskrit (the ancient language of India), yoga translates as "yoke" or "union," describing the integration of mind and body to create a greater connection with one's own pure, essential nature.

Classes that have gained popularity in the United States usually teach one of the many types of hatha yoga, a physical discipline which focuses mainly on asanas (postures) and breath work in order to prepare the body for spiritual pursuits.

We will attempt to simplify the ancient practice of yoga by showing you some basic yoga positions, giving you tips on performing yoga exercises, and inducting meditation practices into your everyday life. Through yoga

and meditation, you could come to a new level of enlightenment with your personal life and enhance the quality of your existence.

No longer is yoga a mysterious phenomenon. It is now simply a way to keep you healthy and aligned. So relax and read on as we explore more about yoga.

WHAT IS YOGA?

As we have said, yoga is an ancient Indian philosophy that enhances personal growth and well being. Although it is a systemic philosophical approach, yoga is not a religion, yet complementary with most spiritual ideologies.

Pop culture would have us believe that yoga involves contorting your body into uncomfortable positions while staring at a candle and breathing incense. You will see that yoga is not as comical as pop culture makes it out to be. In reality, it is a series of exercises that uses poses and focused breathing that results in a greater union of mind, body, and spirit.

Yoga can be done by almost anyone – not just the young who are in shape and healthy. Anyone, regardless of body type, age, experience, or physical abilities, can practice yoga. Yoga can be performed by senior citizens, disabled people, and even children.

Yoga is a tool for gaining body-mind awareness to enhance your physical, mental, and spiritual being. A yoga session will leave you feeling energized and relaxed. You will work your muscles and will properly align your bones; you will breathe deeply, oxygenating the lungs and blood; you will experience true deep relaxation.

By bringing awareness to the body, and working the muscles, you are able to relax them deeper than any other form of exercise. You will gain a deeper appreciation of your body and mind through yoga in a way that no other exercise program will.

Physically inactive individuals to Olympic athletes find enormous benefits from Yoga. That's because the foundation of traditional yoga carefully aligns your body as you hold different types of poses. This precision and the awareness that comes with it lead to tremendous growth – physically, mentally, and emotionally.

As in all physical or mental endeavors, to become proficient in yoga, it requires effort, determination, and most importantly, practice. But then, the fruit we reap is always compounded proportional to the seeds we sow and nurture. Thus, if you are looking for a quick fix, an instant cure, or the suppression of surface symptoms with the true ailment unhealed, you will probably find little satisfaction in yoga.

On the other hand, if you want to keep or regain your health, vitality, and vigor, if you want to feel younger and stronger, and if you are looking for a perfectly balanced and complete form of exercise that can be started by most anyone, in most any condition, and which gets more challenging as you get more advanced, yoga is the right exercise for you!

WHY DO YOGA?

There are many benefits of a regular yoga exercise. Not only does yoga help maintain a healthy lifestyle, it clears your mind and provides clarity of focus – something we all could use from time to time. However, these examples are just a few of the benefits of doing yoga.

Yoga creates both flexibility and strength along with cardiovascular health. It creates mental clarity and focus and emotional balance. It facilitates healing from injuries and is a wonderful way to create wellness.

You weight train to gain strength, jog or do aerobics to increase cardiovascular endurance, practice tai-chi to develop a sense of balance and harmony, stretch to gain flexibility, and meditate to develop peace of mind and relaxation. Yoga is a form of exercise that gives you all these things: strength, endurance, balance, flexibility, and relaxation. It is the only complete form of bodywork that does it all.

Indeed, yoga is more than stretching and relaxation: it is the ultimate mind-body workout.

Also, yoga is perhaps the only form of activity which massages all the internal glands and organs of the body in a thorough manner, including those – such as the prostate - that rarely get externally stimulated during our entire lifetime. By gently stretching muscles and joints as well as massaging the various organs, yoga ensures the optimum blood supply to various parts of the body. This flushes out toxins and provides well needed nourishment to every corner of your body. This helps prevent ageing and gives energy and a remarkable zest for life.

But these enormous physical benefits are merely a “side effect” of this powerful practice. Yoga’s main benefit is that it