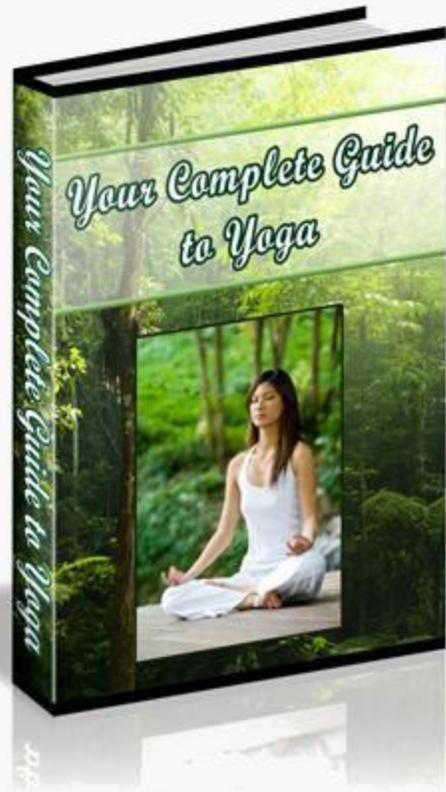


Your Complete Guide to Yoga

All you need to know about Yoga including how to become a yoga instructor to how to set up your home yoga exercise room



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A Quick Overview of the History of Yoga

Yoga originated about 3,000 years ago in India. The meaning of the word Yoga is 'to join' and comes from the Sanskrit language. Yoga was extremely popular in India but it was not a religion.

Today over 5 million people practice yoga in the United States alone. Many therapeutic exercises actually derive from yoga postures and poses.

There is more than one type of yoga and you have probably heard many of these types. One of the most popular types of yoga is Hatha Yoga. It is the best style for beginners to learn as it incorporates all the basic moves of yoga.

Yoga basically has three main components:

1. The poses or postures – often referred to as Asana
2. Breathing techniques
3. Relaxation

In modern society stress is rampant and this leads to people having to deal with more health problems both mental and physical. Unfortunately our food is not as fresh or wholesome as it once was. Even the air we breathe is more polluted. On top of this most people are less active than before and this leads to obesity in all age groups and genders.

The reason why yoga is increasing in popularity is because it is beneficial for the whole body. In addition to improving the way your body looks, yoga can help you relax and heal your mind.

Yoga is easily known as the all in one exercise. It can be a spiritual passageway as well if you desire to follow this path. But it is the holistic qualities that are excellent for all people regardless of their background.

Balancing Life and Work

Twenty years ago yoga was not that popular as it was deemed to be too slow. People turned away from practising yoga and instead took up aerobics. Yoga was seen as totally spiritual and not as a way to get your health back.

Trends have now changed and yoga with its slow movements is again gaining in popularity. One reason for this is because it is gentle on your joints and great for anyone suffering from debilitating pain or other medical conditions.

Many doctors have seen the benefits of yoga when it comes to dealing with stress. It is perfect for anyone wanting to learn how to regain that balance between your working and your personal life. So much so that many large corporations are including yoga and other exercises classes for their employees.

Just take a minute and think about your lifestyle right now. You get up in the morning and rush around getting ready for work. Then you rush home at night look after your kids and try to get some chores done. At the end of the day you fall into bed exhausted but cannot sleep properly!

Yoga can be a way for you to learn how to de-stress your lifestyle and make you feel great about yourself again.

It is the healing portion of yoga which is directly responsible for its renewed popularity. Other more strenuous exercise methods have been responsible for people suffering from bad knees, joint and back pain. Professional doctors are referring these people to yoga classes for treatment.

Another reason why yoga is increasing in popular is that there is more interest in getting back to natural exercise methods. People are willing to learn how to unclutter their minds and detoxify their bodies.

Studies on yoga have shown that it can be responsible for reducing a person's stress levels along with their blood pressure. With heart disease on the rise this is welcoming news.

Because of consumer concerns there is now a ton of information available on yoga. This includes books, DVD's and forum discussion groups.

The basics of yoga boils down to this: learning how to relax your body while being alert and focused. This is when you learn to focus on your breathing, a body position or an object. If your mind starts to wander then you have to refocus yourself and start again.

With stress issues accounting for almost 80% of doctor visits in the U.S. alone. Yoga is proving to be a good, cost effective way to treat certain medical conditions.

Becoming a Yoga Instructor

How to Get Your Yoga Instructor Certification

If you currently enjoy yoga you might be thinking about becoming a yoga instructor yourself. Wouldn't it be great to teach other people yoga and watch them derive as much satisfaction as you do from it?

Just as with any type of instructor or teaching program you do have to reach certain requirements before becoming a certified instructor. One thing to remember is that you want to get the best training you can. This way you are more likely to attract new students.

Always keep on top of new yoga styles and adaptations that are coming out. This could be a great way to jump start your new yoga business. Just go do an internet search for the term 'yogalosophy' and you will get an idea of some of the potential yoga has for the future.

Why Become a Yoga Instructor?

For many people the choice to become a yoga instructor is to fulfill their desire to teach and help people. For others it is a way of starting up a home business of their own. No matter what your reasons are starting anything new in life takes time and effort. So be prepared to do lots of hard work. It will be extremely rewarding in the end and give you tons of satisfaction.

Many yoga students simply want to teach yoga part time and still keep their full time job. They have a commitment to teach so many classes each week and this helps them stay on track with their fitness goals.

If you have a desire to help people learn than teaching yoga is a great goal to have. There are several ways that you can do your yoga training. You can join an instructor class and become certified, this method does take longer to accomplish. Another choice

which is becoming popular is to participate in online or distance learning. If you decide to choose the latter method, be sure to look at the quality of the training which you will receive. This will affect your teaching reputation and your popularity for attracting new students.

Requirements

In the United States you must complete a training program that meets the standards of the Yoga Alliance. You can choose to complete one or two different training sessions. The 200 hour course or the 500 hour one, many students take one at a time while working and gaining experience. Once you have successfully completed these courses you are allowed to use RYT (Registered Yoga Teacher), after your name.

Many teachers will then take specialized courses in the various Yoga styles such as Bikram or Hatha Yoga. If you prefer you could choose to train in one of these styles from the beginning.

You can easily perform an online search to find Alliances that provide Yoga Instructor Certification training in your area.

Costs of Yoga Training:

The cost of your Yoga Instructor Certification will vary depending upon how you choose to learn. It is possible to become a yoga instructor for less than \$100, but what type of reputation will that give you? Wouldn't it be better to say that you trained under such and such institute?

The best method of training is to take one of the Yoga Alliance training courses. The cost for these runs around \$3,000 for the 200 hour program. After successfully completing the course you will be certified and this is something that many students of yoga are looking for today.

This type of training will be invaluable to you if your goal is to open your own yoga studio. You could also set yourself up to become a personal yoga instructor, travelling to

clients homes to teach them privately. The opportunities are endless, especially with the current trends of the health and fitness industry. The payback for your initial outlay could be tremendous!

By preparing yourself and starting out to become a yoga instructor correctly the benefits will be huge. You will easily attract students to your classes and this can set the foundation for a great new business venture.

Yoga and Pregnancy

Numerous pregnant women are beginning to use yoga postures and poses during their pregnancy. The health benefits of yoga are huge and women love the way they can get back to their pre-pregnancy shape really quickly.

If you are accustomed to yoga and have just discovered that you are pregnant, Congratulations! Continue to participate in your regular classes, making modifications as necessary.

If, on the other hand, yoga is totally new to you then you are going to need to take a few points into consideration before getting started.

Yoga and Pregnancy Safety

Exercising safely during pregnancy is your priority. Yoga classes can be extremely beneficial for both you and your baby. Plus it is the almost perfect way for getting your body into shape for the actual delivery process.

For anyone totally new to yoga then look for classes that are advertised as Prenatal Yoga Classes. These classes will be geared to your entire pregnancy. As each trimester comes the exercises will be adapted to match the changes in your body.

No matter what exercise you do whether it is yoga, swimming or jogging always pay attention to what your body is telling you. This is very true during the first few weeks of any new activity.

If your muscles are extremely sore and achy pay attention and attempt to modify the yoga poses. Your yoga instructor will be able to suggest various methods of modifying almost all of the yoga positions.

When participating in your yoga class if any exercises cause you pain, then stop immediately. Joint and ligament pain during pregnancy is very common due to the changes you are experiencing. It can be very easy to injure yourself by overdoing any form of exercise. Always be attentive to your body.

Benefits of Yoga While Pregnant

One of the main benefits that lots of mothers report is that their yoga classes helped them to mentally prepare for the process of labor. Plus that the actual delivery procedure was less stressful on their bodies too. A high percentage also reported regaining their energy and activity levels much faster too.

Mood swings can be a huge problem for a pregnant woman. Yoga can actually help reduce the amount of mood swings which you have to deal with. In addition another huge benefit was that the pregnant moms- to-be noted that their entire body felt less sore and achy overall. This was extremely noticeable during the last two months of pregnancy.

Recommended Prenatal Yoga Poses

There are certain yoga poses which are recommended and should be done regularly while pregnant. The benefit of these yoga poses is that they will have very little impact on your joints but will help you deliver your baby more easily.

The Cobblers Pose is a pose that helps your hips to open and it can be done while leaning backwards if necessary. To perform this yoga pose sit on the floor and put the soles of your feet together. Next, you will then gently push your knees towards the floor.

The Cat Stretch Pose is another helpful position to learn. This pose helps to strengthen your back and your abdominal muscles. This pose is done on all fours, your wrists

should be directly underneath your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Then do the following:

1. Make sure the soles of your feet are towards the ceiling
2. While breathing out round the spine
3. Drop your head and look in the direction of your belly button area
4. Repeat this five to ten times.

The following is a great pose if you find your legs and feet are becoming swollen. It is known as the Viparita Karani or more easily Placing Your Legs Up the Wall pose.

To get into the correct position you should sit sideways to the wall. Then you are going to bring your legs up onto the wall and your back onto the ground. Use your elbows to give you support until you are laying on the floor with your legs up the wall. Then allow your arms to lay flat by your side.

Stay in this position for as long as you are comfortable. To get up from here bring your knees toward your chest and then roll sideways. If your lower back bothers you while lying down try using a yoga roll to help alleviate the discomfort. At first you may find it easier to perform this yoga pose with your knees bent, in time you will be able to straighten your legs out more.

All of these poses will help you stretch your muscles and allow your body tension to disappear. At the same time these poses allow you to relax and allow the tension to leave your body. Enjoy these moments and learn to take the time to unwind from your busy day.

Many yoga postures include balancing which you may find difficult as your stomach increases in size. Modify the poses by using a chair or by a wall so you have additional support.

If at any time during your pregnancy performing yoga poses on your back or stomach becomes uncomfortable then stop them altogether. Work with your instructor to find

suitable alternatives. By making modifications you should be able to continue practicing yoga for the duration of your pregnancy without any further complications.

Once your baby is born you should wait at least six weeks before returning to yoga where you should find a good post natal yoga class to attend.

Yoga Help during Menstruation and Dealing with Pain

There are many reasons why yoga for women is so beneficial. Women have to deal with a lot of stress in their lives, from hormonal changes, to dealing with pregnancy and then having to endure menopause. Practicing Yoga can really help a women cope with all of these issues, from helping their state of mind to improving their whole body.

Women of all ages can suffer from severe menstrual cramps, headaches and pain. Having to cope with these each month can be truly difficult. There are several yoga poses which can help relieve this pain. You will find that you will feel less stressed and anxious and will have the power to deal with PMS each month. Just learning how to relax your body will make you feel so much better. Some of the top poses for menstrual cramps include the Relaxation pose, the Cat Pose and the Bow Pose.

Yoga for women can help in all stages of their pregnancy, from pre pregnancy to after the baby is born. Practicing yoga is a great way to relieve blood pressure and to help asthma sufferers reduce their attacks while pregnant. As well practicing yoga while pregnant will help keep your circulatory system functioning correctly and will help relieve any possible swelling in the legs.

There are many poses which work well for pregnant women including the Seated Forward Bend, the Hero Pose, the Mountain Pose and the Warrior Pose. All work together to give you an excellent but gentle total body workout.

For women who are either entering menopause or who are living with menopausal symptoms, Yoga can be a huge help. Attending a yoga class can leave you feeling more energized and replenished. Yoga helps with menopause by changing the balance of a women's endocrine system. It helps to soften the impact of hormonal and glandular changes taking place with the body.

All the different positions of yoga, from standing, to twisting to the inverted poses are very beneficial. The poses help to increase the blood flow in the body and push fresh blood into the head and neck area.

Many women who have used Yoga to help relieve menstrual pain have now found that they can deal with this period of their life more effectively. They don't feel so run down or depressed. They actually find that they are less tired after practicing yoga and have increased and renewed energy levels.

Yoga for women can help improve all aspects of your life and whether you are dealing with menopause, a new baby or just live in general, you will feel healthier and renewed after each exercise session.

It has been proven that yoga can help reduce pain and this can be achieved by performing certain yoga asanas or poses regularly. Some common disorders which yoga can benefit include:

- Diabetes
- Digestive disorders
- Arthritis
- Arteriosclerosis
- Chronic fatigue
- Asthma
- Varicose veins
- Heart conditions
- Blood pressure
- Back pain

Practicing yoga can really help someone learn how to deal with painful conditions. This can also help with depression and anxiety. The best thing about yoga is that it can be done by everyone, from young to the old no matter where you live and what your

income level is. You will also notice additional benefits of practicing yoga regularly. You may want to lose weight but will find that yoga leaves you feeling less stressed out as well.

Yoga Trips & Vacations

Considerations for Choosing a Yoga Retreat

Visiting a yoga retreat can mean more than just a great vacation. It can be a way to get your life back on track again. Taking time out for yourself and enjoying the experience a yoga retreat has to offer can really help you cleanse your mind, body and soul.

One of the biggest benefits of going to a yoga retreat is that it helps you to refocus. Maybe you need some stress relief or some time away alone. Concentrating on yourself for a week can be extremely therapeutic and increases your self-worth. Once back in your daily routine you will be able to function better and be prepared to deal with everyday ups and downs.

Another reason to go to a yoga retreat is just to perfect your yoga techniques and to meet people who are interested in this type of exercise regimen. You will easily make new friends that you will keep in contact with once you have returned home.

There are many types of yoga retreats to choose from. Plenty are based within the United States and Canada. Of course there are many overseas and one popular destination is to go to Mexico and visit some of their yoga retreats.

Before booking your yoga retreat think about the location. Do you want to be in the mountains or by the sea or even overlooking the countryside dotted with lakes? Many yoga retreats like you to participate voluntarily around the retreat, so make sure you are happy with this type of arrangement first.

Also see what is included in your yoga retreat package. Is massage and therapy included or is this an additional cost? Check to be sure that the type of yoga class you enjoy is offered, some retreats charge extra if you wish to take a hot yoga class for instance.

Many yoga centers offer extra activities in their packages such as cycling and other exercise classes. Some even hold health seminars and educational classes if you wish

to attend. These are all possibilities so you really want to spend some time thinking before booking your final yoga retreat destination.

There are literally thousands of yoga centers and retreats to choose from. Remember to think about location and if you prefer a warm or cool climate. Next consider if you wish to spend time in a group setting or if you prefer to be by yourself. Then once you have your choices outlined it will be easier to pick that dream yoga retreat location.

Yoga Clothing

How to Choose Clothes for Yoga

If you have just started taking yoga classes you will have discovered that you need to wear comfortable clothes. This will just make performing the exercises that much easier for you. Everyone wants to look great while wearing any type of workout gear. It doesn't make a difference if you are purchasing yoga clothes for men, women or children a few rules still apply.

You want to make sure your yoga clothes will hold their shape at all times, even after you have finished exercising. Yoga clothes need to be a little stretchy for ease of movement. Look for materials which will allow your body to breathe and those that will keep the sweat off of your body.

When purchasing your clothes be sure they are easy to wash and will dry quickly. You will probably want to wear them almost every day and don't want to be waiting for your clothes to dry. Many of the yoga outfits may need to be hung to dry instead of being put into your tumble dryer. This is because they are made of cotton which is very breathable but could have the tendency to shrink a little.

Yoga clothes can be purchased in many different locations. Some of the top retailers today have included lines of yoga clothing in their stores. This includes stores such as Sears and Addition Elle amongst many others.

If you are not sure what types of yoga clothes are in fashion do a quick search online to see what is popular. When choosing your clothes make sure they are not too tight or too loose, as they will become annoying.

If you prefer to shop online for your yoga clothes then you won't be disappointed. Many retailers offer great deals to their online shoppers and will even provide you with free shipping directly to your front door.

The great thing about yoga clothing is that it comes in many styles and colors. It will be easy enough to find an outfit which suits your personality perfectly.

Yoga clothes are great to wear around the house on any occasion. They are lightweight and so comfortable you just might find yourself wearing your yoga outfit for doing the housework or chasing your kids around the house.

Yoga Clothes – What to Wear

When joining a yoga class your yoga clothes do more than just make you look good. Of course looking good makes you feel great so that is important. However, yoga clothes are meant to be practical. They should be easy to move in, easy to wash and above all durable.

If you visit any sporting goods store either in person or online, you will see a multitude of yoga outfits. Yoga wear comes in all shapes, sizes, styles and colors. Then there are lines that cater to children, such as girl's yoga pants and men's yoga attire.

Basically it is up to you to choose what type of yoga clothing you will feel comfortable in. Remember you will be doing many different poses and so you want your clothing to move with you. There is nothing more uncomfortable than trying to twist or bend and your yoga pants don't accommodate this!

Organic yoga clothing is becoming extremely popular today. This type of clothing keeps in line with the tradition of yoga, using simplicity and basic items. Organic clothing and mats are easy to find and come with an affordable price tag.

How to Buy Yoga Clothing

When buying yoga clothing you want to have clothes that are made of a breathable material. You are going to be sweating while practicing yoga and you don't want clothes which will stick to your skin and rub.

Online shopping for yoga clothes is all the rage and you might be surprised at the variety that is offered. Yoga is a popular form of exercise and online stores are meeting the demand for yoga clothes and equipment.

In fact, with so many stores selling yoga clothing the prices are actually very competitive. This benefits you as the end customer. You can easily afford to shop for the best deals. When deciding where to purchase your yoga essentials look to see if the store charges for delivery and shipping. Sometimes buying out of state or province will help you save on sales tax charges!

The Bare Basics

The basics for yoga include purchasing yoga pants, a top and a mat. These would be considered the bare essentials for any yoga class. If you are a beginner then it is a wise choice to purchase the basics before dishing out any more money. Once you are certain that yoga is for you then you can spend more money on further yoga outfits and equipment.

Yoga is a great form of exercise and doesn't have to be that expensive. If joining a yoga class is a little too expensive or uncomfortable for you right now, purchase yoga DVDs to help you get started instead.

Yoga for Beginners

What is Yoga All About?

Even though yoga may be viewed as an exercise it was actually first known as a journey of the body and mind. Yoga is the process of movement known as prana. Western practitioners now understand things about the body that stem from yoga practices.

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit root yuj, which means to join together. Prana means your life force. Chakras relate to the centers of your energy located between the base of your spine and the crown of your head.

Many people seek out yoga as a way to simplify their busy life. Yoga will help teach your mind to calm down and find some peace. When practising yoga your energy will become renewed and your body will stay in a healthy condition.

In today's business world finding a good stress reliever is crucial to everyone. Because yoga consists of deep breathing exercises, relaxation and moderate exercise it is becoming known as the best stress buster out there.

Yoga is great for the whole body and provides tremendous results for everyone, even the beginner. The moves in yoga will slowly start to open your mind and body. You will begin to feel taller, you will learn how to breathe correctly and you will have an increased confidence level.

Yoga is specifically designed to work all of your muscle groups. For this reason it is becoming known as a full body workout. It encompasses cardiovascular fitness, leg strengthening and fat burning. What more can you ask for?

There are many reasons why people want to learn yoga. Fitness is one of the biggest reasons for learning but others see yoga as a way to develop themselves as a person. Yoga is a great way to reach your fullness as a person.

Many people who are overweight are getting great results by using yoga. Yoga is very gentle on your body especially when you are out of shape and have difficulty moving. Yoga provides you with a way to get in shape as well as teaching you how to overcome your bad eating habits.

Yoga is great for anyone who has a recurring health issue. It has been known to be very therapeutic and in conjunction with your doctor's advice can help you achieve great results in overcoming an old injury.

Here's a quick recap of how yoga can help you:

- Yoga will help you reduce stress
- Yoga will improve your concentration and self confidence
- Yoga is a great workout for everyone regardless of their fitness level
- Yoga promotes overall well being

Benefits of Yoga

If you are considering taking up yoga then you are making a move in the right direction. Yoga has many benefits and is a form of exercise that is perfect for the beginner. In fact there are many yoga for beginner classes that focus on giving you an overall introduction to the world of yoga.

Some of the top benefits of yoga include becoming more flexible. Over time yoga will help you gain more control of your joints and muscles and you will just be able to do so much more. Areas where you will notice more flexibility will be your back, shoulders, hips and legs.

Yoga involves a lot of balancing and this develops body strength. You will learn poses that have you balancing on one leg, or on your hands. Other poses will have you

moving very slowly, this develops control and strength in your muscles. Of course this takes time but being stronger is a huge plus for many women these days!

As your arms, legs and stomach become stronger they will also become more toned. This toned look will add definition to your body, making you feel sexier and attractive. Plus this gives you a great self confidence boost.

Better Breathing Techniques

Yoga teaches you how to breathe properly and is one of the main reasons why it is recommended for adults and children who suffer from asthma. Learning how to breathe more deeply helps to condition and increase your lung capacity.

Additional breathing techniques can help clear out nasal passages and is beneficial to allergy sufferers. By learning how to breathe correctly you will find that your central nervous system responds differently. You will actually feel calmer and more secure in why your body is reacting in certain ways. Again this is very true for asthma sufferers, once you know what your body is going through, you won't panic and will be better equipped to deal with any sudden attacks.

Where and How to Practice Yoga

Yoga for beginners can be done at a local yoga centre, or if you are feeling a little unsure, then you can practice yoga at home. If you prefer to go the home route you have plenty of DVD's, videos and books to choose from. Just find something that is suited to a beginner and practice as recommended.

Practicing in a group may be more to your liking and there are many yoga classes available. These will be segregated into the different levels, from beginner to advanced and even yoga classes for kids and pregnant women.

No matter which route you choose be sure to practice daily and at a level that is comfortable for you. As you progress you can start to look at classes and tapes that are geared towards the intermediate yoga person as opposed to the beginner. That should make you feel great in itself!

Yoga Poses for Beginners

A good yoga session should last about 30 minutes and it is best to use an exercise mat or blanket to sit on. Yoga poses for beginners fall into several categories and these will be explained below.

Standing Postures: These poses in the upright position help to relieve the tension and the aches and pains in your body on the outside. While internally they help keep the kidney's functioning correctly. Your circulation and breathing could improve along with your pelvis and lower back area. With regular practicing standing poses will help improve the strength of your knees, shoulders, hips and neck.

Seated Postures: These consist of poses which are performed while sitting down. They are calming poses which have been proven to help relieve stress. You will find that your nerves become relaxed and soothed and you will feel less tired. Many people find that they sleep much better after performing these types of poses.

Reclining Postures: Poses in this class fall into two categories, the prone and the supine pose. The prone poses are the ones done on the floor with you facing downwards. Prone poses help to rejuvenate and energize your body. You are usually lying on your stomach or holding yourself on your hands and knees. The supine poses are those done while lying on your back. These are more restful poses and are normally done at the end of the yoga session.

Forward Bends: These movements help to strengthen your lower back and your hamstrings. They also help with improving your circulation and your digestion.

Back Bends: These movements help to encourage deep breathing and are great for anyone suffering from depression. Your body and mind will feel more energized after performing these movements.

Side Bends: These movements help to stimulate some of your organs including the stomach, liver and your kidneys.

Twists: These poses can be done in either a sitting or standing position. The sitting twists are very intense and increase the mobility of your spine. These poses are also great for relieving headaches, stiff neck and shoulders and backache.

Inverted Postures: An inverted posture reverses gravity and brings fresh blood to your heart and head. These poses are great for anyone needing to improve their circulation and refresh your tired legs.

Balancing Postures: These poses will help develop strength and agility along with improved muscle control and coordination.

Yoga is considered a full body workout because it moves your body in all directions in a very gentle way. Each muscle group becomes stretched and toned. You will find that you develop more flexibility and enjoy greater mobility in your everyday life. Yoga is particularly helpful for anyone suffering from circulatory and breathing problems.

Yoga and Pilates

Yoga and Pilates – What They Have in Common

It seems that when people mention yoga they also like to talk about Pilates, what is it about these two forms of exercises that meld them together? Well the answer is pretty simple. Yoga is a form of exercise that is well known to target the mind and the body. While Pilate's targets the entire body. The whole concept of yoga and Pilates is that they complement each other. Or think about it this way. Yoga allows your body to stretch and Pilates will allow you to keep the stretch!

Both yoga and Pilates have a long history and they are proven to work. Combining them together will allow you to deal with the stress and difficulties that every day life can often bring about. Keep in mind that Pilates will develop your core strength. Yoga does this as well but focuses more deeply on deepening your flexibility.

Another large difference between Yoga and Pilates is that yoga can be performed by using a mat. Whereas Pilates is done with the use of many pieces of exercise equipment and this tends to raise the cost of taking Pilates classes.

If you decide to take up both or just one of these exercise forms, you want to learn from an experienced instructor. Learning the correct techniques and forms is critical in order to derive the best benefits.

It is easy to find classes that incorporate both Yoga and Pilates, but you want to be certain that your instructor is well trained in both these disciplines. It takes many years to train correctly in Yoga and/or Pilates and not many instructors will be fully versed in both methods. It is worth taking a look at their credentials before signing up for this type of class.

For many people the issue is trying to decide which class to take, Yoga or Pilates. Yoga is often seen as the gentler of the two and attracts people with a softer disposition. Pilates is known as a strength and muscle builder and attracts people who are looking to get lean, mean, fit and strong!

Both are excellent work out methods and deliver similar benefits. The choice is up to you. Many people prefer Yoga as it is normally less expensive to begin with and can be easily done at home.

You can join up for weekly classes or you can opt for a weekend session at a getaway yoga retreat. Here you could meet people with the same interests and develop lasting friendships. So if you feel that you are ready to try something new, why not consider taking a Yoga and/or Pilates class in the very near future?

Yoga Asanas

Using Yoga Postures to Better Your Lifestyle

There really is so much to learn when starting out with yoga. It is easy for anyone to feel a little overwhelmed by all the different poses and yoga positions. The best thing to do is learn some of the most basic yoga postures first.

Best Poses for Beginners

Your first yoga class will comprise of different yoga postures including opening poses, standing poses and salutations. These poses incorporate twisting, stretching, hip exercises and bending backwards and forwards.

When taking your first class be sure to listen to your body. Even though you do want to push yourself, you don't want to run the risk of hurting yourself.

Along with the basic poses you will also learn how to breathe correctly. Learning these breathing techniques will occupy much of your time in the beginning. But not to worry, you will soon be accustomed to breathing properly and won't think twice about it.

While practicing your postures try to remember to be graceful if you can! You might find that you are concentrating so hard that you forget to be poised. Think of being a dancer and being light and airy in your movements.

Yoga Poses for Infertility and Back Pain

Yoga poses can actually help you with many health issues. There are yoga postures for infertility which have been shown to help increase a woman's chances of becoming pregnant. This is done by teaching you how to relax and by decreasing the amount of stress in your life.

These relaxation poses help to relax all your muscles in your body, not just your mind. If you are trying to conceive then it is advised to attempt these relaxation poses after

having sex. Of course, nothing is guaranteed, but women have reported getting pregnant after using this advice.

Many people start practicing yoga due to back pain and there are many yoga postures to help eliminate this condition. Some of the more common yoga postures are the pelvic tilt, the standing forward bend, and the side angle pose.

Practice Yoga Safely

Learning how to relax and allowing yourself time just for you is very important but you want to be certain not to overdo things. If you have led a pretty sedentary lifestyle don't go crazy by attempting too much too soon. One thing to remember about yoga is that it can fit into your life in many different ways and at different levels.

It is recommended to start off with about 15 minutes of yoga each day, then as you feel comfortable you can increase this amount of time. Be sure to pay attention to your form, take the time to learn how to perform the basic postures correctly. This way you will derive the maximum benefits from each yoga class.

Yoga is not an activity to be taken lightly, it can really benefit your body, mind and soul. Remember, no matter how you are feeling there is always some type of yoga that will fit into your lifestyle and help you feel much better.

Basic Yoga Postures and Some Easy Variations

The Cobra can be done in simple and easy stages.

1. Lie down with your forehead on the floor, pull your legs tightly together and make sure they are stretched backwards.
2. With your palms down put your hands underneath your shoulders.
3. Inhale and raise your head pushing your neck back.

4. Use your hands to push your body up until you are in an arched position.
5. A variation is to straighten out your arms if you feel comfortable enough.
6. You would then bend your legs and drop your head back to attempt to touch your feet.
7. Come out of the pose very slowly and return to the starting position.
8. Repeat

The Bow

1. Lie face down on a mat
2. Inhale and bend your knees up.
3. Stretch back with your arms and try to take hold of your ankles, keep your fingers on the outside.
4. Inhale and raise your head and chest off the floor. At the same time you want to be pulling at your ankles so your knees lift up.
5. Now breathe normally and try and kick your legs up a little higher. You should now be in a bow position.
6. Hold for a few normal breathes and return to the starting position

Shooting Bow

1. Sit with both legs stretched out in front of you. Make sure your back is straight.
2. Reach forwards with both hands and clasp your feet. Your right hand should be holding onto the left foot.

3. Inhale and bend the left knee and pull the foot across your body. Your elbow wants to point upwards and twist your body to the right slightly.
4. Hold this posture and continue to breathe normally.
5. Then repeat this on the opposite side.
6. Only go as far as you can each time, you will reach farther with practice.

Types of Yoga

The Nine Styles of Yoga

Did you know that there are actually nine basic styles of yoga? You will find an overview below of each of the different styles of yoga which you can learn.

Hatha Yoga: This is probably the most common form of yoga in the Western world. Hatha yoga involves cleansing rituals and breathing exercises to help move the body's energy through breathing. It is also known for many of the posture exercises which are part of this style of yoga.

When performing the poses of Hatha yoga use your diaphragm to inhale and not your chest muscles. You will see and feel a huge difference. Try to make yourself feel as though you are dancing from movement to movement. Never force your body into something that you just can't perform. With practice you will notice your body becoming more flexible and supple.

There is a spiritual purpose to Hatha yoga and this is to balance your physical and psychic energies.

Raja Yoga: This is also known as The Royal Path and uses meditation, concentration and breath control. Many instructors refer to Raja yoga as the yoga of the mind. Many like to use Raja yoga after they have perfected control of their body with Hatha yoga.

Kriya Yoga: These are commonly referred to as action yogas. Kirya yoga means calming the mind through self study, breathing techniques and meditation. Kirya yoga acknowledges that our divine energy is stored in the lower parts of our body. This technique allows a person to help move this energy up through your spine.

Karma Yoga: Those that follow this style of yoga attempt to increase virtue by working for others and not thinking about their own personal desires and goals. You are learning to perform a selfless action.

Bhakti Yoga: This involves learning about the divine presence. It incorporates reverence, devotion and perpetual remembrance as it relates to each individual. This type of yoga opens your heart and allows you to achieve a feeling of unity.

Jnana Yoga: This involves the path of knowledge and helps you open up your enquiring mind. This is done by questioning, through meditation and contemplation. If you participate in Jnana Yoga you will find your way of thinking becomes questionable.

Tantra, Mantra, Kundalini Yoga: These three styles of yoga are often grouped together. These styles study writings and rituals as well as sacred sounds. To learn these styles you must learn from a very qualified instructor as you will need to be emotionally, morally and mentally prepared for these teachings.

Even though Yoga is considered a spiritual exercise many people today partake in Yoga for the exercises alone. They do not want to be involved in the spiritual side of Yoga. This is perfectly acceptable and actually one of the main reasons why it is so popular. The exercises alone are of such a great health benefit and can easily be performed without the mind sessions which some people may find uncomfortable.

Yoga Types – Quick Guide to the Different Types of Yoga

There are many types of yoga styles around and reading about each one can be a little confusing. What you want to remember is that all yoga styles are based on the same yoga poses or postures.

Hatha Yoga is extremely popular and this style of yoga involves very gentle movements. Hatha yoga classes tend to be more of a moderate paced class. These types of classes are often recommended for beginners as you will be taught the basics of yoga.

Bikram Yoga is another name which you will come across a lot. Bikram Yoga is also known as hot yoga. Hot yoga is done in a classroom where the heat is between 95 to 100 degrees. The high temperatures help your muscles to relax. This is very good if you suffer from tight muscles. You will sweat immensely during this class and this amount of sweating is said to help cleanse your body. Bikram yoga uses 26 poses but they are not all used in each class.

Power Yoga classes are based on a mixture of yoga styles, the Ashtanga style and the Vinyasa yoga style. Power yoga classes are aimed on strength and flexibility and are perfect for those who don't want to get into the meditation side of yoga.

Power yoga has become very popular in North America and Europe and is seen as a great way to workout. This is the type of yoga you will see offered in many gyms today. Because power yoga is not set on any poses, each class can be totally different and unique. This will depend upon your individual yoga teacher.

Yin Yoga is a form of yoga that entails meditation. Each yoga pose is held for a number of minutes and this helps to stretch your connective tissues around your joints.

Ivengar Yoga uses props to help align your body and could be likened to Pilates. Each pose is also held for a long time and participants use yoga blankets, straps and blocks to keep their body aligned.

It is important to understand the different yoga styles, so you know which to choose. If you are purely looking for a great workout or to lose weight quickly, then the Power and Hot Yoga classes would be your best choice.

If you wish to learn how to use meditation to relieve stress then choose Yin Yoga or a form of yoga that uses these techniques.

With this new information you will be able to ask appropriate questions of your potential yoga instructor. Or if you prefer you will understand which yoga books or DVD's are going to suit you the best.

Yoga for Kids

It is not just adults that can benefit from practicing yoga, kids can too. Yoga for kids has shown to be extremely beneficial and can help with reducing their stress levels and improving their self confidence.

Benefits of Yoga for Kids

Some of the benefits of yoga for kids are that yoga will help them improve their concentration and help them stay focused especially at school. Children who practice yoga regularly have been shown to be sharper and more aware of their body. Creativity and imagination becomes more developed as well.

Health wise yoga has helped improve asthma for many children. They are taught how to breathe more deeply and this has an overall impact on their asthma and dealing with attacks. By becoming more aware of their body kids are able to deal with stress and other difficult situations that they might face.

Many children who suffer with ADHD have been able to focus better in school by taking part in yoga classes. Overall yoga helps develop a child's coordination and motor skills along with additional physical skills. Children who practice yoga while young have more potential to become better athletes as they get older.

How to Teach Kids Yoga

When trying to teach yoga to kids you must remember to keep it short, simple and fun. This way they will stay focused and enjoy their class.

When starting out children should ideally take a yoga class that lasts between 15 – 25 minutes. The poses within each class should be done for about 1 minute each, with lots of frequent breaks in between.

Kids learn yoga by watching and doing. If you simply give them instructions they will not perform each exercise correctly. You need to have an instructor that will get down on the floor and show them exactly what to do.

Yoga Equipment for Kids

One way to make Yoga classes more fun for kids is to get them their own yoga bags and yoga clothes. This will make the entire experience enjoyable and special. Yoga bags come in all shapes and sizes, so you can easily choose one to match your child's personality.

The same goes for yoga clothes for kids. Use the same guidelines as you would for buying yoga clothes for yourself. They should be lightweight and easy to wash and very durable. Again choose to allow their personality to shine through. This will also help increase their confidence level dramatically.

Overall yoga for kids is extremely beneficial from both a physical and mental view point. Your child will become more flexible, confident and outgoing. If they do suffer from a health condition, yoga will teach them how to stay calm and how to handle their condition in everyday situations.

How to Possibly Reduce Your Asthma Attacks with Yoga

Numerous people have seen great results by using yoga to improve and reduce their asthma attacks. The number one reason that these type of results have been seen is because yoga is helping you put your body back into a natural state.

By learning how to relax and perform deep breathing exercises results can be felt quickly. Doing these two things you are clearing your mind and energizing your body. When you concentrate on how you are breathing you will notice that you are breathing more slowly. This one exercise helps to keep your body in a calm state.

Breathing Relaxation Exercise:

1. Sit down with your back straight.
2. Place your feet flat on the floor with your knees directly over your feet.
3. Put your hands on top of your legs.
4. Close your eyes.
5. Inhale slowly and deeply.
6. Concentrate on filling up your lungs and allowing your ribs to expand outwards.
7. Exhale and concentrate again on allowing your lungs to slowly release the air. This will happen naturally, just be aware of what is happening.
8. Repeat this slowly over the next few days. Start out with 3 minutes of practice and then work up to a 10 minute session.

By doing these exercises regularly you could see a huge improvement in your asthma.

Yoga Exercise at Home

Yoga at Home – How to Get Started with Your Yoga Workout

If you have decided to start participating in yoga as a way to get fit, then you have chosen an ideal exercise. Not only is yoga great for your body, but it can be a wonderful stress and relaxation method. Yoga has been shown to be extremely helpful for many health issues including Asthma and back pain.

Your Yoga Room

To get started with yoga at home you want to set yourself up a yoga area or yoga room. This will be a quiet place that you can exercise in without being disturbed. The basic equipment you will need to get started with includes:

- Yoga mat
- Yoga DVD or Book
- Towel
- Bottle of Water

As you become more advanced you might wish to start using yoga blocks and straps in your routine.

The Basics of Your Yoga Workout

When you first start practicing yoga you should concentrate on learning the basics first. This includes how to hold each pose and very importantly how to breathe correctly. At first these are the only two things that you should be focusing on.

When you have the basic yoga poses down then you can start adding additional movements. At this time you can start including some form of yoga meditation if you wish. Many people like to include this at the end of their yoga session. Meditating helps you to relax and rejuvenates your body before heading back to your daily schedule.

Setting Up Your Yoga Schedule

When you first start your yoga workout you should only spend a few minutes on each pose. If you can't manage very much at first, don't worry, your body will adapt quickly.

During your first week try to practice yoga for 15 minutes each session and aim for two to three sessions each week.

As you become more accomplished then increase this time to 30 minutes each time. A good routine to follow is one that includes lots of stretching. Then you want to get into poses and hold each one for as long as you can. The seconds will turn into minutes if you keep persevering!

In time you can then add a session where you do standing and seated poses separately. You can practice yoga every day if you wish. If you go this route then use three days a week to do a shorter yoga workout. Then aim for a longer and more intense workout on the other four days.

Because you are practicing yoga at home, you don't have to worry about missing classes or taking a shorter class. Do what your body feels comfortable with as much as possible. Don't feel bad about taking a day off, rest up and relax by taking a hot bubble bath. Then resume your schedule again.

Once you have your home yoga area set up, use it to your advantage. Why not see if you can get your spouse or boyfriend to workout with you? Yoga for men is on the rise and they might just discover how much they can enjoy doing a yoga workout with you!

Yoga for Weight Loss

Many people discount yoga as a way to lose weight. They just think that yoga is all about stretching and will never help them burn calories. Well if you do things correctly yoga can actually help you lose weight quickly.

First off yoga is a very safe and effective weight loss method. It is gentle on your joints and works the mind and the body. This is a very important aspect of losing weight, contending with the mental aspect of changing your habits.

There are certain basic poses which have been shown to be very helpful for weight loss.

The first series of poses are known as Sun Salutations. These are the kind of poses that are often used by Martial Artists and yoga practitioners in India. Poses for Sun Salutations are easy to learn and to perform, you could actually relate this pose to the more popular burpie exercise.

Some of the benefits of these yoga poses are that they help decrease your waist, improve your flexibility and your circulation. These poses are often recommended by doctors for losing weight and helping with depression and anxiety. Plus they are the perfect way to loosen up our body and condition your internal organs.

How to Perform a Sun Salutation:

1. Stand with your palms together as though you are about to start praying.
2. As you inhale stretch your arms above your head.
3. Exhale and bend forward attempting to touch your toes.
4. Inhale and use your right leg to step backwards. Your hands and left foot should stay on the ground.
5. Bend your head backward. Your left knee should be between your hands.

6. Inhale and hold your breath.
7. Move your left leg from your body.
8. Rest on your hands and keep your body in a straight line.
9. Exhale and lower your body to the floor.
10. Your goal is to have only your hands, knees, hands, chest and forehead on the floor.
11. Inhale and bend back as much as you possibly can.
12. Exhale and lift your body off the floor. Your feet and heels should stay on the floor.
13. Inhale and bring your right foot level with your hands. Your left foot and knee should be touching the floor.
14. Look up and bend your spine slightly.
15. Exhale and bring your left leg forward. Keeping your knees straight bring your head down to your knees.
16. Raise your arms over your head and bend backwards as you inhale.
17. Exhale and drop your arms.
18. Relax.

This is technically known as performing a round. You should try to do at least 6 rounds a day with a goal of doing 30. It is recommended that you do this pose first thing in the morning in front of an open window. It should only take you around 10 – 15 minutes each day to complete your round.

As you can see the Sun Salutations will be extremely beneficial for your whole body when losing weight. You will be able to get a leaner and more defined body in no time at all.

Of course you probably have several trouble areas that you want to target. The abdominal area is always high on your wish list and some good poses for this area are:

- The Forward Bending Pose
- The Bow
- The Peacock Pose
- Spinal Twist
- Triangle Pose
- For your arms use:
- Peacock Pose
- Wheel Pose
- Crow Pose
- Side Plank Pose

Your thighs will benefit from:

- The Bow Pose
- Shoulder Stand
- Hero Pose
- Triangle Pose
- Wheel Pose

A quick internet search on YouTube will give you access to videos of these particular poses. Or you can purchase instructional DVD's for step by step instructions.

Yoga for Meditation

Yoga is well known for its meditation properties and people today are returning to these practices. Yoga is allowing people to learn how to meditate correctly and teaching them how to improve their lifestyle at the same time. Nothing makes you feel more relaxed and refreshed than a wonderful yoga session.

Many research studies have been done on meditation and they tend to confer that yoga helps both your physical and psychological well being.

By learning how to meditate you can learn how to deal and reduce physical pain. You can learn how to decrease your stress and blood pressure, with so many people suffering from high blood pressure this is very important today.

In fact yoga could be looked at as a self healing method. Of course it takes time to learn these techniques correctly but even with basic knowledge you can improve your health.

It is also safe to say that our actions in the past determine our future. So if you can learn how to improve these things you could technically look forward to a brighter future.

There are varying levels and degrees of meditation which are suitable for the beginner to the advanced person. Classes have been specifically designed to meet these different needs. By attending a class at your level you will derive the best benefit for yourself.

Meditation may be more natural for some people, but it is an art which can be learnt. By learning from a qualified instructor you will see results faster. It is recommended that you meditate either early in the morning or late at night as this is when your spiritual energy is at its highest.

Tips for Meditating:

- Free your mind before starting to meditate

- Meditate in a quiet place
- Meditate in the same place and at the same time if possible
- Only focus on meditating and not on day to day problems
- Try to regulate your breathing so it follows the same pattern
- Ensure that your head, back and neck are in a straight line

After your session has finished it is important for you to note your results. This way you will learn to understand how the body and the spirit are connected.

Conclusion

Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years and has often been linked to the symbol of the tree. This is because Yoga has many different branches and you can take your pick how many branches you wish to study from.

One difference is that the paths of yoga can often overlap while branches do not. Look at it this way you can only hang from one branch at one time. But you can take part in different yoga aspects at the same time. Many people choose this path until they find one that suits them the best. You can easily do the same too.

If your goal with yoga is to increase your flexibility and strength then you have chosen the correct path. All style of yoga will teach you how to become more in-tune with your body. You will finish your yoga session feeling more at peace with yourself. In today's busy world this is indeed a blessing.