

YOGA

YOGA, What can you expect, for mind, body and spirit?

Balance, Strength, and Flexibility

One of the most obvious things about having a body is that it tends to stiffen and tighten the older you get, much like a plant that is tender and supple when young and becomes hard, dry, and woody with age. When you were young, you were probably very flexible; most children are. As you have grown older, your range and ease of movement have probably diminished. Perhaps you're not as spry as you once were, you move more slowly, and you may be experiencing more aches and subtle pains. You may also have noticed that you're less energetic, less resilient to change, more prone to injury, and that injuries take longer to heal. You may not feel quite as alive as you used to feel.

Given the way most of us live and think, this is neither surprising nor mysterious. Nor is it something that happens suddenly. It creeps up slowly, and you notice it gradually. Your awareness of this gradual decay and loss of vitality, however, can spark a very real commitment to the discipline of yoga.

With yoga you can dramatically retard, even reverse, the tendency to stiffen as you age. You can actually bring the suppleness of youth back into your life and be more flexible, durable, and stronger than you were as a child. You can learn to focus your physical and mental energy more effectively and thereby be more vital, creative, and efficient in all your activities. Clarity and tenacity in your work is often a result. Statistics indicate regular Yoga practice has decreased sick days, and improved attitude and cooperation between employees. There are many physical benefits that accrue from regular yoga practice. The three most obvious are the immediate increase in your balance, strength, and flexibility.

Balance

Improved balance refers not only to the heightened physical coordination you will acquire, but to the balance of power between the left and right, front and back, and high and low aspects of your body.

None of this would matter much except for the fact that being asymmetrical and unbalanced creates a certain inevitable level of stress and strain throughout your body. Many symptoms and diseases are related to the integrity of the spine. Yoga helps to keep our spine in line, thus eliminating over time multiple symptoms. Yoga creates symmetry throughout your whole body, making you strong and flexible in a balanced way.

Strength

When you feel tired and weak, you also feel heavy. You literally feel heavy, a burden to yourself, as though you had to drag yourself around. When you feel energetic and strong, however, you feel light, and life doesn't seem so difficult. The weaker you are, the heavier you will feel. The stronger you are, the lighter you will feel. A consistent yoga practice will make you strong and light.

The whole tone of your body will change as your strength increases. You will have an easier time handling your own body weight. You will feel sturdier and surer of yourself. You will have a lighter step, your experience in the world will become a pleasure, and life will feel and be easier.

Flexibility

As you free your body and become more flexible, you not only restore lost movement, you actually erase tensions and internal conflicts that would otherwise accumulate and eventually erupt as pain. The more flexible you are, the harder it is for pain to lodge in your body. Pain and tension are forms of blocked, stuck, misplaced, and misused energy. Being more flexible opens these energy blockages and frees your energy circulation. Your entire body will feel clean and new as the stuck parts are freed and released.

Pain often comes from neglect (a form of misuse) and is always a signal to take care. Because your body is operating more harmoniously, it will not demand your attention in uncomfortable ways. Your awareness and life experience will again feel pure and untainted. This is probably the way you felt when you were young.

Growth/Change/Discovery/Transition

The gratifying result of being healthy and in a more blissful state, is that your body becomes barely noticeable, much like having your car in perfect running order. When your car is perfectly tuned, you're driving experience enhanced, you see the scenery, and the people you are with. You are not worried about whether the car is about to break down or not. The way to alleviate worry and transcend "car-consciousness" is by taking care of your car, not

by ignoring it and leaving its well-being to the whims of chance. The way to transcend worrisome body-consciousness is by taking care of your body. The idea is not to become obsessed with your physical form. Simply give it enough care and attention so that it functions as the perfect instrument and comfortable embodiment it was meant to be.

Your feet cannot be comfortable in a pair of shoes that has become too small. Nor can an emerging flower be comfortable by staying inside its protective husk that has gradually become too tight, nor a growing chick inside its shell. You cannot be comfortable in old belief structures and limited self-concepts. Allowing yourself to open and bloom, breaking any belief structure that limits your awareness or causes your pain and anxiety in your growth. Letting go of what does not serve you allows the blooming and with that will come a new sense of self and new appreciation for life.

Most of us have an inclination to resist change in an attempt to remain comfortable by staying the same. But life is change. Change happens, especially when you're involved in a powerful transformative process such as yoga. In order to stay comfortable as you grow, you must flow with the changes and not attempt to remain the same.

MEN and Yoga:

Although for many men, (including my husband prior to finding out otherwise), upon hearing the word Yoga may bring up images of incense filled rooms where thin women chant and twist themselves into human pretzels. Guys don't allow this stop you from investigating it. Yoga is not just for women, and the benefits to us men are huge, especially for healing back pain complications. Trying yoga, perhaps with modifications made by the instructor, you will find routine sessions can do wonders. You will lengthen those muscles, and bring more flexibility, (great for runners). It makes those weekend warrior sessions more fun, and less painful, even improve your golf or tennis swing. Try it and prove it to yourself, don't kid yourself, it is a workout, but unlike others you may have tried.

What a Yoga class looks like, how will I feel, what do I wear, how will I feel afterward.

A Yoga class is typically 60 minutes long. You usually sit on a mat, (beach towel will do initially). Class begins with breathing, learning a new deeper breath, then moves into gently relaxing tense muscles, long muscles first, working down into your core later on., then adding some balance practice to quiet the mind and enhance bone strength. There is usually a warm up phase, a deep stretch portion, consistent breathing tips, both upper and lower body are usually worked. The most important ingredient of Yoga is that this is YOUR practice. You are encouraged to listen to your body, competition is not encouraged. Practice with compassion affords each individual to grow, stretch, and experience their own practice. The last segment is a rest/relaxation/muscle memory time that last 5 to 8 minutes. You will typically feel relaxed, less stressed and sleep well. You are encouraged to drink water before and after your Yoga class. A bath of Epsom salts can help release tension and stress, often eliminating any soreness. We do not encourage pain; we do encourage a nice feeling of working the muscles and perhaps a new sensitivity and connection to your body.

How frequently should I practice?

Most students begin with once a week, this is a fine beginning. More results will be felt if you attend 2 classes a week. If you are doing Yoga to enhance a sport such as a running, golf or martial arts you will find your Yoga experience will greatly aid your other training. General recommendations are given for 10 to 20 minute workouts between classes, and specific workouts to augment specific sports or chronic ailments can also be provided. Please feel free to communicate your individual needs to your Yoga instructor. Personalization is how we differentiate ourselves and represents our business model.

