

A Guide To Modern Yoga

- What is Yoga
- Movements and Postures
- Relaxation and Meditation
- Much Much More

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What is Yoga?

All About Modern Yoga

Yoga is an ancient art of meditation and exercise that has its origin roots in religion and mysticism. The original purposes of Yoga were liberation of the self from worldly desires and the attainment of a state of spiritual perfection through practicing various physical positions, breathing exercises, and mental conditioning. Modern Yoga focuses more on the physical aspects of Yoga and its health benefits, doing away with the mysticism and finding rational, scientific explanations for why certain feats formerly thought to be "supernatural" were actually feasible through Yoga.

The origins of Yoga were founded in the Hindu faith, with 6 major branches of classic Yoga philosophy. Later branches of Yoga spread out widely all over the Far East, merging with other Asian belief systems. The most notable branches that persist to this day are Buddhist Yoga, Zen Yoga, and Tibetan Yoga. These three branches in particular most easily integrated Yoga as part of their practices because the basic beliefs in Yoga meshed perfectly with their passive philosophies.

Modern Yoga is most well known for its physical benefits. One of the mainstays of Yoga is incredible limberness and flexibility on par with that of a contortionist. The reason for this flexibility is that Yoga's primary means of exercise has less to do with shock and speed training like weight lifting and calisthenics, and more to do with various physical positions that stretch the body to its utmost limits of suppleness. These extensive positions actually take into account the full range of almost each possible permutation of kinesthetic motion the human anatomy is theoretically capable of making.

Breathing exercises also figure prominently in Yoga, and certain breathing methods are taught for the various positions. While originally these were thought to be mystic in nature, channeling "energies" into parts of the body, modern science has revealed that the main reason these breathing exercises increase the stamina and physical endurance is because the breathing methods of Yoga maximize the flow of oxygen throughout the body. Lung capacity and the efficiency of the lung's air sacs are also improved because the various positions taken stretch them out further so air reaches deeper into the lungs.

Meditation is another benefit of Yoga. Once again its roots are often mistaken as supernatural in nature, for things like creating harmony

with the universe and a heightened state of awareness. In reality, meditation is simply a form of mental conditioning that allows the mind to relax and work in a more focused and efficient fashion. One example includes letting go of all thoughts and letting your emotions flow through you without affecting you directly. Simply put, this is a form of self-hypnosis that improves self-control by allowing a person to acknowledge emotions without having to react to them, like those taught in modern self-help books like The Silva Mind Method series.

Advanced Yoga practitioners are also capable of incredible feats long thought to be magical by a lot of people. One of the most notable of these is suspended animation, where a Yoga practitioner can be buried in the earth or stuffed inside an airtight box, left for hours, and then retrieved alive without suffocating. These feats are possible because part of the mental conditioning of Yoga includes exercises where a person becomes much more aware of the various parts of his or her body. Simply put, this eventually allows a person's brain conscious control of normally subconscious bodily functions like the heart beat rate or flow of blood. By actively slowing down his or her personal metabolic rate, a Yoga practitioner can go into a state of suspended animation similar to a bear hibernating.

Modern Yoga is actually a perfect supplement to a lot of different physical arts. Because of its many benefits, it can easily improve the performance of athletes whose skills rely on reflexes, speed, endurance and flexibility like runners, gymnasts and fencers. Dancers and other similar performance artists also benefit greatly from Yoga practice. On a more classic note, Yoga has also long been partnered with martial arts, whose personal tradition of mysticism has also been thankfully rendered into scientific terms in the modern age (leverage, coordination and timing account for much of the so-called supernatural abilities of martial artists).

Movement and Posture

Advantages of Yoga Positions on the Human Anatomy

Practicing Yoga is one form of exercise that can greatly benefit the human body, and unlike most modern forms of physical fitness programs, classic Yoga can be practiced even by people with physical ailments that would otherwise prevent them from taking some of the harder and higher impact forms of modern exercise.

The main reason is that Yoga takes a far more gentle approach to physical conditioning than regular running, calisthenics or lifting weights. Most of the exercise takes the form of gentle stretches that tone the body and increase suppleness. The best way to describe the difference is between a slender young hardwood tree as opposed to a stalk of bamboo. Most modern exercises, with their hard approaches, make a body denser and tougher, but due to a lack of suppleness these bodies, like a hardwood tree, will snap under enough pressure. Yoga's emphasis on gentle stretching is like a bamboo tree, allowing the body to bend with pressure instead of breaking under it.

The first and most obvious physical improvement with Yoga can be seen in the muscles. There are two main types of muscles, ones that are short, thick and bunched, and another type that tends to be lean, long, and slender. Yoga's various positions stretch out a person's muscles so they become the latter instead of the former. This actually not only provides flexibility, but also affords a higher strength to weight ratio for the body. The reason for the higher strength to weight ratio is because of the developed slenderness of the muscles, more muscle fibers can exist within a given space as opposed to the short and bunched type.

Tendons and Joints are another major recipient of the benefits of Yoga. Where high impact activities tend to shock a person's tendons and joints, causing trauma (hence the need for shock-absorbing materials in most sports shoes to protect the knees and ankles, for example) Yoga's stretches make the joints and tendons far more flexible and durable. Many of Yoga's positions are designed to maximize the ranges of movement of almost every joint within the human anatomy. At higher levels, a Yoga practitioner's range of movement is actually comparable to a contortionist. Even at lower levels of practice however the positions in Yoga are designed to help a person's major joints and tendons become much more supple.

Yoga also gives cardiovascular benefits to its practitioners. There are basic breathing exercises in Yoga that are designed to improve lung capacity and efficiency, and to improve the circulation of oxygen rich blood throughout the entire body.

Taken by themselves, these breathing exercises are used by some types of athletes as well as professional orators and singers. However, Yoga's various positions are made to actually improve on the effects of these breathing exercises, as some of them stretch the lungs in such a

way that breathing while in those positions fills more air sacs within the lungs and improves the flow of blood to targeted points of the body.

The skeletal system also naturally benefits from Yoga training.

Normally, traditional hard exercises tend to build dense bone structures designed to take high impact. However, using the hard wood and bamboo analogy again, these same heavy bones would be prone to fracture with enough applied pressure. The bone structure of a Yoga practitioner develops a greater degree of flexibility, becoming lighter and suppler, absorbing impacts that would otherwise fracture regular bone.

Also, hard exercises cause higher amounts of calcium build up within a human body as the bones try to pack on greater density and weight. Yoga exercises actually encourage the body to use ingested calcium more efficiently, avoiding calcium build up.

Lastly, one of the little known benefits of Yoga lies in its effect on the nervous system and reflexes of a practitioner. Many of the postures within Yoga also stretch out accompanying nerves within the body parts being worked. The greater and more efficient flow of blood and oxygen in those body parts combined with the stretches actually makes for

healthier nerve cells that are able to transmit synaptic impulses faster and more efficiently. This improves a person's balance, coordination, and reflexes.

The improvements to balance are further enhanced by some of the advanced positions that require, for example, standing on one leg while the other leg and both arms are in a certain position. One of the biggest reasons for Yoga's tendency to improve a person's nervous system is also the fact that many of the positions target the spinal column itself, which forms the core of the nervous system.

Breathing

Yoga's Breath of Life

One of the primary philosophies of Yoga refers to the very simple, natural act of breathing as the "Breath of Life." Many people write this off as mysticism. These people think that everyone is born knowing how to breathe, so why make a big deal out of it? The simple fact is, Yoga teaches more efficient methods of breathing that, when coupled with their various exercises and positions, actually maximize the often-untapped potential within a person's respiratory system.

The normal way the lungs work is this: the lungs themselves are a pair of sacks within the chest and have no muscles to speak of. Instead, they rely on the diaphragm for motion. Located right underneath the lungs, the diaphragm is a membrane which is responsible for the act of drawing in and expelling air by making the lungs inflate and deflate with it's motion. The strength of a person's diaphragm is what actually determines how "powerful" a person's lungs are. Singers are often taught a method of deep breathing similar to Yoga's basics that strengthen the diaphragm immensely.

Yoga's exercises have two major effects on the respiratory system. One, they strengthen the diaphragm and improve it's range of motion, allowing for deeper and stronger breaths. Secondly, they likewise stretch the lung sacs to their utmost limits allowing for more air to be taken in.

There are many advantages to an efficient diaphragm and set of lungs. The first is regulated body temperature. Air circulation along with fluid intake helps a person maintain stable body temperatures despite thermal changes in the immediate environment. Metabolism is likewise affected by breathing, as blood cells have a part called mitochondria

which processes oxygen in the blood stream and converts it directly into energy for the body's use. Another advantage of breathing is detoxification. Not all of a body's waste elements are removed through sweat and excretion of urine and feces. Several minute trace waste elements in the body are also removed when we exhale.

Breathing and posture are also closely related factors. The most basic rule is that good breathing creates good posture and vice versa. Yoga takes this simple rule a step further by creating positions in their exercises that help the lungs stretch out to maximum capacity.

Normally, when we breathe in air, it only fills 50-70% of what our lungs are actually capable of. The postures of Yoga helps air circulate throughout almost the entire 100% of a practitioner's lungs so that the often-unused portions are also opened up for use in regular breathing.

The key to Yoga's approach to proper breathing is described in modern terms through autonomic and somatic breathing systems. Autonomic breathing is, simply put, breathing done without conscious thought. It is the natural way we breathe air when we're not thinking about it.

Somatic breathing exercises are a modern way of describing physical movements and postures that enhance breathing efficiency. These are often exercises that require conscious control of the manner and rhythm in which we draw breath. Yoga exercises bridge the gap between the two, using somatic breathing exercises that over time become autonomic ones that practitioners employ naturally and without the need for conscious control.

The breathing system taught by Yoga is referred to scientifically as diaphragm breathing. Martial artists and singers are two types of people who also employ this breathing method. The emphasis is on drawing the breath lower into the body by various exercises that focuses the muscular effort on the diaphragm as opposed to the chest, which leads to rapid, shallow, and inefficient breathing. People who breathe with muscular emphasis on the chest too much commonly cause hyperventilating.

Lastly, Yoga's approach considers many different body positions taken when breathing because people's bodies breath differently when upright, lying down on one's back, lying down on one's stomach, bent over forwards or backwards, etc. Normally, even for singers or martial

artists their trained breathing patterns get disrupted when they are no longer in a regular upright position.

Yoga's positions train the body to use efficient breathing no matter what position the body takes. These are the major reasons why Yoga often refers to its breathing system as "The Breath of Life". Quite simply, it is because Yoga teaches the most effective method for breathing known today.

Abdominal and Pelvic exercises

Yoga and Your Love Handles

You may have noticed that there are very few practitioners of Yoga who have traces of fat on their stomachs. While in most other "slimming" exercise regimens the only ones who are in shape are the instructors and veterans, even casual Yoga practitioners often sport fewer, if any, bulges on their bodies than their counterparts in aerobics or calisthenics.

This often makes people wonder, because Yoga doesn't even emphasize weight loss as being a major part of it's purpose, and yet somehow miraculously the people who take up Yoga manage to lose more weight than people who go to diet centers, slimming gyms, and other programs which are supposedly designed to help people lose weight.

The best way to explain this strange phenomenon requires a contrast between modern "hard" abdominal and pelvic exercises as opposed to the gentler methods employed by Yoga.

Let's start with the time honored and well loved torture device, the sit-up. Sit-ups require a person to lay down flat on the floor, legs folded slightly and knees raised a tad. Then the exerciser simply bends at the waist and raises his or her upper body off the floor, bending towards his knees as far as he or she can go, then lowers the upper body back down to lie on the floor again. Repeat ad nauseum.

The theory behind this is that the exercise builds up abdominal muscles and causes the tummy to sweat, said heat and sweat "burning off" the belly fat. The reason it doesn't work? The excess of muscular effort in that area makes you hungrier AND increases the rate at which your

now-aroused digestive system absorbs food and liquids. Now guess which part of your body those digested foods are going to be stored? If you guessed the stomach, you earn a gold star...

Crunches are another exercise method which took the place of regular sit ups when it was discovered that the tension caused by normal sit ups caused undue stress and tension on their victim's lower backs. This led to various back problems for exercisers. Crunches are easier on the back and much lower on stress. Simply put, people doing crunches lie on their backs again but flat this time. Then, jack knifing slightly at the waist, they simultaneously raise their legs and upper body off the floor, forming a shallow letter V with their bodies. Lower both body parts, wash, rinse, and repeat.

Crunches, aside from being easier on the back than sit-ups, proved to be more effective at removing love handles because the muscular strain involved less motion than a sit-up, which required tucking the body forward. This allowed exercisers to perform more crunches in the same amount of time and for comparatively less strain. The increase in muscular "burn" for less exhaustion (which led to less hunger than sit-ups) proved more effective.

Yoga, on the other hand, employs stretching and breathing exercises that require very little effort (and are actually often relaxing) coupled with breathing exercises that improve metabolism. This essentially leads to a metabolic boost that burns off fat while relaxing the body, thus avoiding the increased hunger that regular exercises create.

One example of a Yoga posture that helps the abdominals is the basic dand, or cat stretch. This is done by getting down on your hands and knees and, exactly like a cat stretching it's back, arch your body down towards the ground. This stretches not only your abdominal muscles, but also your chest and shoulders as well. Then, arch your back upwards in the opposite direction, making a "bow" with your body supported by your legs and arms. This stretches the spine and back muscles. Unlike classic exercises which would have you repeat this motion several hundred times, Yoga instead stresses stretching slowly and completely throughout the length of the motions, and actually holding each at it's peak (as far as you can stretch) for several seconds while you breath in that position.

Another exercise method used in Yoga is referred to in modern science as dynamic tension. In dynamic tension, muscular effort is expended to

make a limb NOT move, and hold a certain position rigidly for a certain period of time.

The boat pose is a position in Yoga that shows this exercise method off, and it targets the stomach as well. It is performed exactly like a crunch, in that you lie on the floor and, jack knifing at the waist, form a letter V with your body. The difference is that you HOLD the pose in the boat position, freeze in place, and just breathe. The effort of actually holding a static position actually generates more exercise than repeated muscular contractions, while tiring you out less.

These are simply two examples of why Yoga practitioners are usually much more slender and streamlined than their counterparts in traditional weight loss programs. They don't go out of their way to lose weight, it just happens to be a pleasant side effect aside from gaining improved flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular exercise from Yoga.

More Abdominal/Pelvic Exercises

Yoga Postures for Losing The Bulge!

Yoga practitioners are often skinny as eels. This can be extremely frustrating for people who go into traditional weight loss programs and, instead of slimming down and losing weight, actually wind up becoming muscular in certain areas while somehow miraculously keeping their love handles.

Women find this particularly frustrating, especially when they simply want to slim down and DON'T want rock hard, Conan-esque muscles bulging from their shirtsleeves. If you want to keep your muscles toned but SLEEK, and still manage to lose love handles, back bra-strap bulges, and those other annoying little areas of fat that somehow stick to you like a burr, then your best bet is to try out Yoga. Here are a few simple examples of Yoga positions designed to help the abdominopelvic area.

Ashwini Mudra - this is a simple posture that targets the butt. It can be achieved from the classic "lotus" posture that everyone knows, where you're sitting upright on the floor and with your legs crossed. From this position, the ashwini mudra simply means that you tighten the muscles of your butt and bring them together. Dipping your knees a bit lower to the ground increases the range of movement and the extent of stretching. On a medical note, the exercise of the rectal muscles

actually helps bowel movement. On an aesthetic note, it keeps your butt perky and defying gravity.

Mula Bandha - this is another Yoga exercise that requires little stretching and movement. It should be done while standing upright. It requires a high degree of personal awareness of your own body, however, so may be difficult for beginners. Simply put there is a part of the body referred to as the "pelvic floor". This area is essentially a triangle, with your hipbones' sides and your tailbone forming the 3 points. Now, take that "floor" and raise it up towards your navel region, straight up. This muscular contraction helps digestion, and on another note, the muscular effort involved actually exercises the lower abdominal muscles, which are often a trouble spot for regular sit-ups and crunches.

Agni Sara - this is a technique shrouded in a lot of annoying mysticism that, thankfully, actually works even without all the chakra and pranic mumbo jumbo that "enlightened" Yoga instructors claim to teach. In modern Yoga, it's taught as exactly what it IS - a useful exercise that helps strengthen the stomach muscles. To do this position, stand up straight. Then, bend forward to place your hands on your thighs, just above the knees. Let your arms take the weight of your upper body so

that your stomach muscles are completely relaxed. Now, you know how you can "tuck" your tummy in, so that it's like your navel is trying to touch your spine? Do that while exhaling. Then do the opposite, expanding your stomach as far out as it can go, while inhaling. Repeat slowly several times. This actually gets rid of a beer gut REAL well without the pain or stress of crunches.

Uddiyana Bandha - this is almost exactly like agni sara EXCEPT that you don't breathe in or out while you do the muscular contraction and expansion. You actually hold your breath when doing this exercise. Before you turn blue in the face while doing this, switch to Agni Sara. Alternate the two, using Agni Sara to get your wind back, then Uddiyana Bandha to actually kick up your cardiovascular endurance. The "tummy burn" of uddiyana bandha can actually get quite intense.

Nauli - this is the "final form" of agni sara and uddiyana bandha. It essentially follows the same procedure, with one major (and difficult) procedure that requires excellent muscle control. Due to the high degree of muscular control required, you should not practice this until you get the first two down comfortably. Essentially, the Nauli involves contracting the SIDE muscles in your waist instead of the frontal abdominal muscles. It's like you're trying to squeeze the sides of your

waist inwards, towards your the center of your tummy. Then outwards, exactly like Agni Sara. AND like the Bandha, this exercise is done while holding your breath throughout the movements. Needless to say, this targets the love handles.

Postures for Standing

Yoga Standing Exercises: For The Everyday Man

Yoga exercises often evoke pictures of people twisting themselves into positions that make them resemble knots of rope or pretzels. What people don't know is that the simplest positions in Yoga can be done while standing upright without having to lower yourself to the floor and playing a game of "twister" with yourself.

The main reason Yoga has so many exercises that would be more at home on a contortionist is that Yoga's stretches and positions are designed to maximize the suppleness and stretching limits of each and every part of the human body. The basic anatomical rule in Yoga is that if a joint CAN theoretically twist in a direction or fashion, then you SHOULD exercise to make it capable of doing so.

This is coupled with Yoga's efficient breathing exercises that maximize the flow of oxygen in the human body. Again, because people tend to breath differently when standing upright, lying down on their backs or stomachs, sprawled on hands and knees, etc, Yoga assumes that a person should be able to employ maximum breathing ability with almost any position the body may find itself in. No matter how improbable it is that in every day life you'll be twisting your torso and limbs around that way.

That said and done, for the average person who doesn't want to delve too far into Yoga, it's actually best to concentrate on the upright standing exercises that it teaches. This allows you to take advantage of some of Yoga's many benefits without having to go through the extensive training required for the more esoteric positions.

Don't expect it to be a cakewalk either, though. Some of Yoga's standing positions require excellent balance. The biggest advantage to mastering these positions will be that you'll be in perfect balance at all times while walking or running, thus improving your coordination for other physical endeavors that requires flexibility and balance while standing, like dancing.

One of the simplest and easiest beginning Yoga positions is actually something almost all of us do every morning without thinking about it. Stand up straight. Now, bring your hands together over your head, stretching your arms up. Some people prefer to lace their fingers together while doing this; others just press their palms together. In either case, now streeetch and crick upwards with your entire body, making all those joints go pop. This is something almost all of us do naturally. Yoga people call it Surya Namaskara, or the Sun Salute. Amazingly flowery description for such a simple move, eh?

The Chair is another common Yoga move some people will be familiar with. From a standing position, point both arms forward, hands facing down. Flex your knees into a semi-squatting position. Now FREEZE and hold it for as long as you can. This should be a familiar move for kids who went to schools where teachers used it as punishment, usually by placing books on the forearms of the victims. Ah, the many uses of Yoga!

Not all Yoga positions are that simple and easy, of course. One example of a Yoga standing position, which can be incredibly difficult to pull off, is the Dekasana. If you can actually do this one, you're probably in

decent shape and it will heighten your abilities further. In the Dekasana you suspend all your weight on one leg. You bend your body forward, parallel to the ground, while your other leg goes straight up out behind you. Your arms go straight out to the sides like the wings of an airplane to help you maintain balance. Modern Yoga practitioners call this the airplane - an apt nickname since if you lose your balance you'll crash and burn. Ouch.

Most Yoga positions gravitate between these extremes of difficulty, and standing postures are often meant more to develop balance, coordination and strength than joint flexibility and suppleness. The advantage to practicing standing Yoga postures is that they are made for regular people who don't want to devote too much time and effort into the study of Yoga. After all, man is a bipedal species whose natural posture is standing upright, so why learn positions from Yoga that mimic the movements of quadrupeds? These positions DO have their purpose and uses, but for the average guy or girl the standing exercises are often useful enough.

Back Bending Postures

Back Bending Postures in Yoga

Yoga is a popular body exercise that is very physically relaxing. Originally, it has been a part of a religious physical ceremony in India, but because of its beneficial features to the human body, the activity has gained popularity among health buffs from all walks of life.

If you are into Yoga, you are probably familiar with the different postures you must observe during the activity. These postures give emphasis and specific benefits to particular areas of the human body. Two basic types of postures you must know about are the back bending and the forward bending postures.

Logically, forward bending postures for Yoga are those specific Yoga tasks that provide emphasis and focus on the forward muscles, organs and movements. There are specific muscle groups that are targeted by this Yoga posture.

Back bending posture, of course is the same, but targets the opposing muscle groups to those targeted by the forward bending postures. Much emphasis must also be done to back bending postures because they are also as important and effective in giving benefits to the body.

Body positions when back bending

There are specific body positions that must be observed when you are doing the back bending postures during Yoga sessions. These are the flexion and extension. You must also know about the recommended accompanying breathing and supine positions when back bending.

In any physical activity, and particularly in back bending during Yoga, flexion is the particular position that is conducted through decreasing of the joint angle. In back bending, you can do this by bringing one hand closer to the knees. Doing so would effectively flex the back muscles. Extension is the opposite term or concept.

Supine position is a usual back bending technique when doing Yoga. To do this simple task, lie down on the floor face up. Then slowly bend forward to reach for something on your front. Obviously, this activity stretches the back effectively.

Through all these activities, your breathing must be regulated. You know that when executing almost all exercise, you must breathe accordingly. Inhale when you are doing a less stressful part of the task

or as you gain momentum and force and exhale when you release that stress or you apply more pressure to the muscles.

Specific back bending postures

There are specific back bending postures when doing Yoga. These are the Camel, the Cobra, the Locusts, the Bow, the Prone Boat and the Knee Joint postures. Take note that all these postures can relate to the action or animals used in their names.

The Camel posture is very simple. In this Yoga technique, you have to take your arms behind your body by placing your hands on the soles of your feet. You do this and you are practically bending, putting pressure on your lower back, but stretching your front muscles in the navel up to the chest.

The Cobra and Locust postures are both back bending poses that are usually recommended for people who need lower back pain relief. You know the posture of the snake called cobra and the insect locust. Just imagine the two creatures and make your body resemble them.

The Bow posture can be done easily by reaching for your feet from your back while you are lying down to the floor, face down. As you reach and hold your feet from this position, you are creating a body symmetry or angle that can look similar and shaped like a bow.

The knee joint posture is achieved when you bend forward, and reach for the knee joints. When you do this, you are putting pressure and flexing the muscles at the back, which are stretched. Likewise, the prone boat position also does the same to the body and the involved muscles at the back.

Overall, back bending postures in Yoga are considered easier to accomplish when compared to the forward bending approaches. Of course, you have to know more about forward bending postures in Yoga sessions to make a better comparison and understand the physical dynamics of both Yoga postures.

Do the necessary back bending posture and experience how it is like to flex the back muscles. Total relaxation can be attained through the Yoga techniques.

Now let's take a look at those opposing approaches – forward bending.

Forward Bending Postures

Forward Bending Postures in Yoga

Yoga is an art form of exercise. It isn't as strenuous as the usual types of exercises, but its benefits to the physical state of being are tremendous.

Yoga combines the relaxing effect of stretching and flexing to specific and targeted areas of the body. That is why many people do the activity when they aim to relax and at the same time shed off some fats and stored calories in the body through sweating.

If you are into Yoga, you must first have some basic knowledge about the activity. You know that Yoga is an exercise form that originated from India, from the mysteriously popular religions.

Through the years, people have been curious about Yoga. Thus, more and more people are getting into the activity not just because of their

curiosity but because of the benefits the physical program can do for the human body.

When you regularly do Yoga, you must know about the two basic postures observed when doing Yoga activities. These postures are the back bending and the forward bending. As the names suggest, back bending postures provide focus and emphasis to the front muscles, while forward postures emphasize the back group of muscles.

You must particularly know more about the basic forward postures if you are still new and emerging into the Yoga practice. Forward bending postures are very challenging because you would be required to flex to the front, giving shear pressure to the front muscles and at the same time stretching and flexing the muscles at the back.

For a start, forward bending postures and activities directly involve the head, the neck and the chest. That is because these body parts are located at the frontal system of the body. Also, the basic movements of forward bending postures are focusing and pertaining to these body parts.

The lumbar and the lumbosacral forward bending

The word 'lumbar' literally pertains to the abdominal segment of the body. Thus, lumbar forward bending postures are Yoga positions that give emphasis and challenge to the abdominal portion of the body.

When doing Yoga, you could opt to focus on the lumbar forward bending techniques to provide challenge and eventually strength to the abdominal area of your physical being.

On the other hand, lumbosacral forward bending involves flexing and challenging the muscles at the back area of the pelvis that is between the hips and of course, the back. Thus, lumbosacral forward bending involves bending the upper torso forward. Sideward to forward bending at the side parts of the body give emphasis to the muscles at the back area of the pelvis located between the hips.

As for sacroiliac nutation and counternutation, the body is very much flexed to do activities that would stretch and exercise the muscles and the joints that are interconnected to the base of the important part of the skeletal and nervous system called the spine. Such opposing Yoga movements help attain better condition for the joint in the specified body parts.

Other forward bending techniques

There are other forward bending posture techniques that you could do when you execute Yoga tasks. Forward bending at the hip joints is one of them. Through the activity, the joints at the hips are flexed and moved. You know that exercises and movements that move such joints help those body parts secrete more good oil for proper and better movement and functioning.

Forward bending techniques that move the ankles and the joints in the feet are also recommended. That is because such Yoga techniques are proven to help make joints at those specified body parts do better and perform according to how they are supposed to perform.

Overall, forward bending techniques are beneficial to the body. There are so many good things that Yoga techniques can do for the joints and the adjoining muscles, whether great or small.

No wonder health buffs are becoming hooked on Yoga. Yoga can be addictive. It is also proven to rapidly improve body and joint conditions and help the overall being of a person attain total relaxation.

Try the different forward bending postures or techniques when doing Yoga and feel improvements in your body.

More Forward Bending Postures

Some Forward Bending Techniques in Yoga

Let's do a bit of review.

Yoga is a very relaxing, yet challenging exercise program. It may not be as tedious and as hard as the ordinary weight-lifting activity, but it sure is effective in improving the function and overall state of the body and the various targeted external and internal organs.

All across the globe, the popularity of Yoga can never be underestimated. Many gyms and fitness centers now offer special Yoga classes for those who are so curious and so into Yoga fitness training.

If you are starting to get into Yoga, you have to bear in mind some basic pointers that will help you carry out basic Yoga exercises easily

and effectively. You have to observe proper posture and even proper timing of breathing if you want to get the full benefits of practicing and executing Yoga activities.

Take note that breathing is the process when the body takes in oxygen from the surrounding air to be assimilated and used in many bodily functions. You know that oxygen helps keep blood pumping through the veins. In Yoga, and in all physical activities and exercises, it is important that breathing be regulated to ensure that oxygen flow to the different muscles and organs in the body will be ideal and effective.

Forward bending posture

Another thing you should know more about is proper body posture. Posture is very important because it defines the nature of each and every Yoga exercise and it is very significant in making the Yoga regimen become truly effective and beneficial.

When considering executing forward-bending posture in Yoga, you should take note that activities related to the posture should involve the hands and the feet. You know how body balance can be greatly affected by balancing movements of your feet and two hands. These

body parts should act accordingly and in good coordination to achieve a good forward bending posture.

Just like in all other Yoga activities and exercises, always remember to breathe accordingly if you want to maximize the benefits of Yoga to your overall physical health. Forward bending techniques also require you to firmly stand on the floor because all Yoga movements will have to rely on the strength of the feet and how your body can effectively balance through the feet.

Down-facing Dog and the Child's Pose

Down-facing Dog and the Child's Pose are just two of the most popular and well-practiced forward bending techniques in Yoga. Both techniques are popular because of their physical benefits.

Both techniques help keep the blood vessels throughout the body healthy and well toned. Through Down-facing Dog Yoga, for instance, the usual weakening of systems and blood flow efficiency is somehow reversed or prevented.

That is also the case in Child's pose, which is a Yoga activity that makes the body execute a task that will produce an activity similar to usual child posing. The task is very relaxing and is highly recommendable for people who need to relax and improve organ functions.

Meanwhile, another forward bending technique, the posterior stretch focuses more on physical relaxation. Doing this posture activity helps the body release any form of physical discomfort as you are seated while doing hand and upper body movements.

Sacroiliac flexibility

Another important task when doing the forward bending posture during Yoga sessions is the sacroiliac flexibility techniques. The term may be highly technical, but to better understand it, just think of the joints in the pelvis.

Through doing flexibility exercises for the sacroiliac joints, you are improving the functions of those joints. Hip flexibility exercises also attains the same results because they are basically similar to sacroiliac flexibility techniques.

Doing such Yoga exercises will help the body eliminate lower back pain and discomfort. Hip joints will also be conditioned to function better and more effectively.

Overall, forward bending activities when doing Yoga is helpful because these tasks target important joints in the body. Back pains are also reduced if not totally eradicated if you regularly execute forward bending Yoga activities.

What Are Twisting Postures?

What Are Twisting Postures?

There are various positions and movements that are used in Yoga. Positions and movements include standing, sitting, prone, supine, balancing and twisting, among others. These positions aren't exclusive of each other, and are typically combined. These positions are usually held for a few seconds.

Benefits of Twisting Postures

Twisting postures are specific postures used in Yoga that require an individual to rotate his body sideways.

Twisting postures have specific benefits for the body. Twisting postures are popular methods of relieving an individual's back pain. When a twisting posture is held, a combination of processes occurs inside the body, providing relief from tension. The spine realigns and subsequently lengthens. Muscles of the back are also loosened.

Long-term practice of twisting postures promotes proper posture and results in increased flexibility and strength to the spine. Flexibility is achieved by allowing the spine to employ different movements, specifically flexion, extension, rotation and lateral flexion. Meanwhile, strength is achieved by allowing your spinal muscles to contract while maintaining a certain position.

Twisting postures have also been suggested to provide other health benefits, including prevention or relief of depression, infertility and heart and lung disease. However, these theories haven't been adequately proven scientifically.

The human spinal cord is divided into 5 divisions: cervical, thoracic, lumbar, sacral and the coccyx. Twisting postures greatly benefit the first three divisions, namely cervical, thoracic and lumbar spines.

Cervical Spine Twisting

The cervical spine, which consists of 7 vertebrae, is the most mobile division of the spinal cord. The mobility of the cervical spine is mainly attributed to the first two cervical vertebrae. These two vertebrae are anatomically unique. The first vertebra, known as the atlas, is composed of two arches. Meanwhile, the second vertebra, known as the axis, has a projection into the atlas called the odontoid process.

Movements of the cervical spine are mainly attributed to these two vertebrae. The joint between the skull and the atlas allows forward, backward and lateral movements. On the other hand, the joint between the atlas and the axis allows rotational movements. Cervical spine movement is necessary to assist an individual's vision, and consequently, his or her balance.

The most important function of the cervical spine is supporting the entire weight of the head. Thus, it is quite common for the cervical

spine to maintain an incorrect posture and for the muscles to feel strained. Yoga twisting exercises, specifically neck relaxation and shoulder circling exercises, are helpful in achieving correct posture of the cervical spine. Neck relaxation exercises are accomplished by moving the neck in all possible directions.

Thoracic Spine Twisting

The thoracic spine, which consists of 12 vertebrae, is situated between the cervical and lumbar vertebrae. Due to its attachment to the ribs, it is the least mobile division of the spinal cord. The thoracic spine allows limited movement, specifically flexion and lateral movement. The main function of the thoracic spine is to maintain stability amidst all impulses coming from the head and the upper extremities, and assist in respiration.

Incorrect posture of the thoracic spine can lead to a disease known as scoliosis. Scoliosis causes misalignment of the vertebrae, resulting in back pain, decrease in height and, in worse cases, difficulty in breathing. Thus, it is important to correct these postural problems. This can be done through thoracic twisting exercises, such as torsion exercises with the arms.

Torsion exercises with the arms begin by lying supine with the hands stretched out. One arm then crosses the chest to reach the other hand. This is also an example of a supine twist.

Lumbar Spine Twisting

The lumbar spine, which consists of 5 vertebrae, is situated between the thoracic and sacral vertebrae. Incorrect posture of the lumbar spine results in tilting of the pelvis, which can subsequently lead to weakened and shortened muscles.

Lumbar twisting exercises not only prevent incorrect posture, but also strengthen buttock and abdominal muscles. Start the lumbar exercises by lying supine with the knees bent. The knees are then moved from one side to the other. Another lumbar twisting exercise that can be used is the Sitting Spinal Twist, wherein a seated person rotates his body to both sides.

Twisting postures in Yoga help individuals achieve the correct posture and relieve back pain effectively. However, in certain medical

conditions, such as hypertension or active hepatitis, twisting postures may be contraindicated. It is recommended that individuals consult their physicians prior to engaging in Yoga or other such activities.

The Headstand

Do the Yoga Head Stand

Many people are doing Yoga nowadays. This is more than just a fad. This is a lifestyle that can really help anybody. It pays to be physically healthy and Yoga can help you achieve that. This is why when you venture into Yoga, you can improve your body for a healthier you.

The Yoga Head Stand

Various movements and exercises are involved in doing Yoga. These will vary depending on the level of capability of the individual. They are risky and challenging movements that you can consider as you improve on your Yoga skills. The headstand for one is a good challenge to take your strength and flexibility to the next level.

The head stand pose, also known as the Sirsasana, can be performed in your Yoga class. Being able to do the headstand and learning the proper alignment of the body can help in calming your brain as it strengthens your body. It is best to take on this step with the guidance of an instructor. This is something that will be crucial for beginners. Thus, take your time to stretch your body until it is ready for this next move.

Use a mat or blanket to support the body for this exercise. Carefully kneel on the mat as you place your forearms flatly on the surface. The elbows must be maintained with the width of your shoulder. While pressing your wrists in a firm position, slightly move your upper arms outward. Be sure to breathe properly as you do these preliminary steps. Then, set the top of your head carefully on the floor. Breathe in.

Bring your feet closer your elbows. This will help you to slowly lift your legs off the floor. Keeping your heels elevated will help. Make sure to keep your shoulder blades firm to avoid the possibility of collapsing your weight to the neck. If you need to extend your time in doing these movements carefully, then do so. Just don't forget to stay relaxed and maintain proper breathing. As you slowly lift your feet, it will help to

bend your knees more. This will help you in doing the movement safely. Keep your position firm.

Your upper extremities will play a big role to secure your headstand. Be careful and firm in your movements to protect the upper extremities as you work them out. It will help to balance your weight evenly on your two forearms to maintain your posture. Twisting and bending some of your steps will also help. It is also important that you keep your tailbone in the direction of your heels to help your balance.

A beginner must normally aim to stay in this position for at least 10 seconds. As you improve on your flexibility and strength you may be able to stand longer, even up to 3 minutes. Extending the time can be done gradually by adding at least 5 seconds each day that you do the exercise. Once you come down after the head stand, be sure to maintain proper breathing.

Benefits of the Yoga Headstand

Acquainting yourself with the way the cardiovascular system works will help you appreciate more the ways of Yoga. The stretching and exercises involved in Yoga focus mainly on developing the strength and

flexibility of your body. As such, you get to develop a more improved physicality. There are also breathing exercises incorporated to the movement. Thus, your cardiovascular system becomes more relaxed and well circulated. This contributes to a more relaxed feeling. This is why those who do Yoga also improve their state of mind as their body gets well exercised.

Yoga exercises are also excellent to give a boost to the health of your spinal cord. The part where you utilize your upper extremities will help in preserving the good condition of your nerves. The exercise can also train your skeletal muscles. The exercise can also minimize the production of carbon dioxide because the meditative aspect of Yoga allows you to control your heartbeat.

Conclusion

Doing the Yoga headstand is a perfect means to improve your strength, flexibility and healthy disposition. Be sure to execute it properly and carefully.

The Shoulder Stand

Doing the Yoga Shoulder Stand

Yoga is a very popular lifestyle nowadays, both to the eastern and western parts of the world. Many individuals and celebrities are getting hyped up with Yoga. However, don't treat Yoga as a mere fad. This is one way of living that will really benefit anyone, especially in the busy world we live in today.

Doing Yoga exercises is known to benefit the body through the different movements that emphasizes on improving the strength and flexibility of the body. This has also been found to be good way for people to relieve their stresses. Some diseases can even be overcome through the help of Yoga. The breathing techniques and the gentle stretches are definitely good for a tired body. Relaxing the body as you aim to be more physically fit is a good way to ensure your health.

Once you decide to venture into the Yoga lifestyle, there are various moves that the instructor can teach you that will improve your overall health and well being. There are some that may take some time and some that will challenge you. The best thing to do is to maximize the benefits that you can get from it, like the Yoga Shoulder Stand.

The Shoulder Stand

The Shoulder Stand pose, also known as the Sarvangasana in Yoga circles, is one exercise that can benefit the body and the individual. This is recognized as the Queen among the various movements and exercises done in Yoga. It is known that doing the Shoulder Stand can benefit the entire body.

To do the Shoulder Stand, the body has to take on a bent forward posture. At the same time, all the body parts are utilized to support the posture. The shoulders, neck and the upper back are stretched. Once the Shoulder Stand posture is achieved the shoulders and arms will support the whole body. The body is then in an inverted position without attracting injuries. This position allows the blood to flow freely to the heart, as there is no gravity force to contend with.

You must also be familiar with the variation of the Shoulder Stand. The Lifted Shoulder Stand or the Plow Pose or Hala-asana is a challenging morning exercise that promotes flexibility and alertness. You do this by lying flat on your back with your palms on the floor as you inhale deeply. Move the knees to the stomach area and exhale. While doing

the breathing exercises, raise the legs in a perpendicular angle to the floor. Continue to raise your legs until the toes reach the floor on the back of your head. This is the inverted action in the posture. Do the reverse steps to return to original position.

Benefits of Doing the Shoulder Stand

Primarily, doing the Shoulder Stand will help the thyroid gland to be properly nourished. Ensuring the good state of the thyroid gland will also ensure the proper condition of other body parts. This situation can help the body easily regulate the metabolism and improve the digestive system. The heart rate will also be controlled. This is also a good way of enhancing the balance and growth in the nervous system.

Doing the Sarvangasana position is also a good way to improve the circulation of the blood to other body parts. The legs and the abdomen will be more toned by the improved circulation. This movement is also a good way of massaging those areas and relieving the body of unnecessary stress.

This can also favor the mental state as the increased flow of blood to the brain can be tranquilizing to the individual. This posture can also

benefit you by overcoming sequelae or any pathological condition that resulted due to injuries. With the guidance of a trained teacher, it is possible to achieve a better disposition.

There is a distinct sensation that you will feel when you do the Shoulder Stand. The extra pressure and tension that you put in the neck area will bring about this feeling. The same may also be felt in your face and ears. Thus, there is no need to freak out when you feel these details. Just be wary to do the warm ups and the right movement to avoid an unnecessary pain. You should also practice breathing properly because the Shoulder Stand position will restrict the expansion of your chest.

Conclusion

Doing the Shoulder Stand is a good way to improve your body. There are benefits that will improve your disposition and health. Thus, don't hesitate to take on the Yoga lifestyle. Live as healthily as you can.

Relaxation and Meditation

Relaxation and Meditation with Yoga

In this busy world that we live in, being able to relax and find peace means a great deal for many individuals. This healthy state is more than just a mere luxury that people want. Doing relaxation and meditation are essential to improve the disposition of anyone who has responsibilities. This is why many are doing the Yoga way of living.

Yoga is a practice that has been around for centuries. This originated from the Hindu philosophy. It is now gaining popularity in the eastern and western countries as it emphasizes a healthy way of living.

Generally, Yoga techniques teach one how to properly exercise, breathe and meditate. As such, the body becomes healthier as the mind becomes more relaxed.

Relaxing Benefits of Yoga

There are many types of Yoga in practice. One of the most common aspects of Yoga that people seek is the capability to improve the well being of the person through helping the mind concentrate properly. This focuses on the relaxation benefits of Yoga that are crucial in the

modern way of living. Teaching the body to properly control breathing, posture and concentration attains such goals.

One of the most common relaxation postures is the Lotus Position. It is a Yoga exercise that will help you achieve the relaxation and meditation that you need.

To do the Lotus Position, it is important to find a nice area on the floor where you can comfortably sit. The right foot is placed on the left thigh and the left foot is placed on the right thigh. This is just like an ordinary Indian sit, only with more twist. Your knees must be on the floor with your feet positioned upward. Maintain also a good posture as you do this by keeping your back in a straight position. You might find doing this posture quite difficult. If you feel pain at first try, then it is best to prepare for a few more days by doing stretching exercises.

Once you have properly positioned your legs and feet, you should focus on your hands. There are three alternatives to situate your hands in the Lotus Position. You can hold your hands with the palm side facing upwards and lay them on the heels of your feet. The other hand position is to keep your palms down and put them on your knees. The third alternative is to put your hands on your knees with the palms

facing upwards. Then use the index finger and the thumb to form a small circle.

You can also do a usual breathing exercise by doing a normal warm-up stand that incorporates Yoga principles. Do this by standing with the feet together and the arms at the side. Then bring your arms above your head with the palms holding together. Do this after taking a deep breath. Tilt your head back without arching your spine. Do this as you inhale and exhale deeply. After this, bend your knees to bring your arms to the direction of the floor. Then get your head tucked into the knees. Inhale then raise your head and lift your chest. Exhale. Doing these steps is a good way to relax your body as you do the exercises.

Doing the Yoga exercises that focus on relaxation and meditation is perfect to improve your breathing. Basically, breathing exercises produce a calming effect on the mind. The exercise alone requires a certain degree of concentration. Thus, it can help the mind to stop paying attention to distractions and focus on the exercise first.

Relaxation and meditation with Yoga can also relatively improve your muscular system and other body parts. The emphasis on breathing is an emphasis on your life and health. Through breathing, you are

nourishing your body with oxygen. It also improves the circulation of the body because it increases the amount of oxygen in the system that the body needs. This can balance the carbon dioxide that found its way on the blood and cells.

Living the healthy way is always good. Doing relaxation and meditation through the use of Yoga principles and exercises are the main keys to help you attain a healthy goal. Make sure you get the best out of this lifetime by doing the good things that can improve your disposition.

Yoga and Your Baby

The Benefits of Yoga to the Baby

Yoga is a popular modality nowadays. However, it is more than just a fad that will pass in time. This is actually a choice to live a healthier lifestyle that can help you improve yourself in the long run. Thus, doing Yoga is something that you can choose to benefit your body and even the rest of your family, including the baby.

For most women, they do Yoga even during their pregnancy. This helps improve their disposition and train them in breathing exercises.

However, even after giving birth, the baby can still join the mother in Yoga endeavors. Kids, babies and toddlers can also do this practice in their own way. Baby Yoga is a quiet exercise that the young child can share with the mom or the other members of the family. The only difference is that the exercises are created specifically for the baby.

It can be claimed that kids can naturally do Yoga. Just leave your toddler in a safe spot and you can observe the baby doing some moves. Babies crawl on their four limbs or go upside down or even attempt to point upwards then reach their toes. These are indications that your baby can do his or her own Yoga in their own pace. So don't hesitate to let your baby benefit from this healthy exercise of doing Yoga.

The Benefits of Yoga to the Baby

There are many benefits that Yoga can bring to your baby. This will definitely make Yoga a more worthwhile exercise for the mother and

the baby. Do this option and you can assure the same benefits to be enjoyed by everyone in the family especially your baby.

Build Healthy Bodies

Doing Yoga exercises help in enhancing the strength and flexibility of the individual. The training helps in developing a stronger spine. The baby can also develop his or her spatial awareness early on through the help of Yoga. Your baby can even develop a sense of confidence in his or her body considering that the baby can perform things using the body.

Yoga Resources

Best Yoga Resources

More and more people are enjoying the benefits of Yoga in their lives. This way of living has become increasingly more popular among many people. However, you shouldn't look at Yoga as a mere fad that will pass by. This is a healthy choice that people have decided upon because it brings benefits to the body and to the sense of being.

Some people may have learned of Yoga because their favorite celebrities do the same exercises while others may be by friends who have benefited from Yoga. There are those who may have read about the concept and tried it themselves. So try the Yoga lifestyle for yourself. All it takes to be successful in your fitness goals is to get hold of the Yoga resources that will help you in getting the proper training.

Yoga Training

The Yoga training can help you achieve a physical fitness that no other alternatives can offer you. This can aid in your progress and personal growth by having more control over your body and mental faculties.

To ensure that you accomplish your goal, it is best to research on what Yoga resources you can access. Most gym facilities will give you a reference for Yoga training sessions. Some gyms may have a Yoga practitioner on staff. Some health clinics will also give you this option. The online community is a good place for your search.

There are also certain tools that you need to use to successfully do Yoga. The good thing about this is that they aren't expensive compared to other sports and exercises. Some of them may just be in your

storeroom. Yoga mats are essential to ensure your safety and comfort as you do the Yoga moves. However, you can replace this with other household items like a big towel or a clean mat.

Once you are able to do the advanced exercises in Yoga, then you may need to consider the other tools. Bolsters, blocks and belts are some of the supportive materials that can help you do the other movements. You will discover the other specialized tools as you explore more of this activity.

You also have to consider getting a trainer who can teach you the proper techniques in Yoga. This is one of the best Yoga resources that you can benefit from. Select the best teacher. There are many out there. However, you have to rely on the one who can give you the right assistance. It is your Yoga teacher who will guide you to progress in your physical and mental growth.

The reliable Yoga teachers must have undergone the proper training. In selecting your Yoga teacher, ask for some certification that he or she has taken a formal training. Ask for references too. You can inquire from previous clients if they would recommend the Yoga teacher. Your friends and relatives who do Yoga can also give you a recommendation.

Familiarizing Yourself with the Yoga Terminology

Undergoing Yoga training will introduce you to proper exercises that will test your strength and flexibility skills. At the same time, you will discover that the training will make use of Sanskrit terminology. Your instructor will normally indicate basic moves in Sanskrit terms, so you may want to prepare ahead by doing research on what terms are used and what they refer to.

Some examples would be Sirsasana for Headstand, Sarvangasana for Shoulder Stand and Halasana for the Plow Posture. These postures are generally referred to as Asanas. You will encounter other Sanskrit terminologies as you continue with the training. Don't be intimidated by such terms. Think of it as a way of truly embracing the principles of Yoga.

Normally, your trainer can teach you these things. The Yoga teacher can also adjust the instructions to English so that you can easily follow. However, learning the terms will definitely aid you in appreciating the training more. This will help you flow through with your Yoga exercises.

Conclusion

Yoga resources are out there for you to explore and use. Just take the initiative to make Yoga your lifestyle. You will definitely love the results of achieving a healthier disposition for your body and mind.

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Mike Hepburn

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