

How To Maximize The Power Of Yoga

HOW TO MAXIMIZE THE POWER OF YOGA

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Yoga In The West

Yoga as a concept was introduced in the West a long time ago. It is only now that more and more Americans are taking it more seriously than they ever did before.

Yoga as a way of life is catching on fast with the Westerners as more and more people familiarize themselves with the truth behind this centuries-old Indian practice.

It was towards the end of the eighteenth century that Western scholars began to understand how closely related the Indian languages are with their European counterparts. The study of such an interconnectedness that ensued introduced them to the concept of yoga as it was present in the Indian sacred texts.

A breakthrough came when Englishman Charles Wilkins pioneered the translation of Sanskrit text of The Bhagvad Gita to English. It was also the efforts of American statesman Alexander Hamilton who closely studies the Indian culture, tradition, languages and even delivered a lecture in Paris about India in the year 1802-03.

By the nineteenth century, the knowledge of yoga was spreading among the Westerners who were involved closely with the study of Indian texts. They were able to trace the development of the concept from its source, now that English translations of the texts were available to them. Notable in this field and worthy of mention are the efforts of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson who made the above mentioned possible. Also, during the same time, a strain of the thought processes behind yoga also began to be felt in the works of the American and European Romantics.

However, as is commonly known, and earlier mentioned, yoga has become a way of life with many Westerners. It has not only been incorporated in the daily lives of people, but also in their way of thinking.

This knowledge of yoga as a concept came into the popular consciousness of westerners through several instances of cross-fertilization due to close interaction between the two cultures.

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Swami Vivekananda, an Indian intellectual, contribution to making Indian culture familiar to the West is notable. His address at Chicago in 1893 to the World's Parliament of Religions is perhaps the most important event that helped India to reach out to the world. Indian guru Parmahansa Yogananda I another important figure who made yoga popular in the West, through his teachings, the Self-Realization Fellowship that he set up, and through his own autobiography.

Other figures worthy of mention are B.K.S. Iyengar (founder of Iyengar Yoga), Swami Rama (the Himalayan Institute), Swami Satchidananda (Integral Yoga), and Swami Vishnu-devananda (Sivananda Yoga).

Yoga: The Six Branches

Yoga has been around in the eastern world for centuries, and the classical techniques of yoga go back to about five thousand years ago. If you are interested in going in for practicing yoga, you should have an overall idea about the various branches of yoga.

There are six branches of yoga, namely Hatha, Bhakti, Karma, Raja, Tantra and Jnana. Hatha, which is the most popular branch of yoga, is actually the physical part of yoga or the yoga which involves postures or asanas. The Hatha yoga is thus basically composed of 'asanas' are the physical postures which yoga practitioners have to do, 'pranayama' or breathing techniques, and meditation. Hatha joins the body and soul and make the body healthy, and helps to keep the mind free from stress and anxiety.

Bhakti is the yoga of devotion, involving the heart and faith. This branch of yoga permits the yogis to discern the actual humanity in all people and makes them able to see everything from all aspects, thus enabling them to endure, love and accept everything and everyone peacefully. Bhakti yoga teaches its practitioners how to devote themselves completely to god, and teaches them that all creatures are created by the Almighty and that appreciating other creatures and life itself is an act of devotion to god.

Karma yoga is the branch of yoga which considers that a person's current state is a result of his past state, i.e. whatever the person's situation is in this life is a consequence of his previous life, and whatever he will do in this life will determine his condition in his next life.

It deals with service and involves action's energy. Karma yoga teaches yogis that they should ignore all negative aspects of their life and focus on doing good things and thinking good thoughts. It teaches that if lead a virtuous life in this life, then you will have a happy life in the next life.

Raja is the 'king of yogas' as 'raja' means 'royal'. It's based on the eight limbs of yoga and involves meditation. It teaches that the universe exists for the self, and this leads to self-esteem and reverence for your fellow creatures.

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Tantra yoga is based on understanding of Mantra (mystic syllables) and Tattva (truth). Tantra yogis feel an increased awareness regardless of whether they're awake or asleep. However, only those who are chaste, brave, devoted, loyal to his guru, true, trusty, honest, and be humane and have love for the whole universe can be practitioners of Tantra yoga.

Jnana yoga involves the mind as it is concerned with knowledge and wisdom. It improves the yogi's cleverness and astuteness.

After reading about the six branches of yoga, you should be able to decide which yoga is suitable for you. You can sign up for a yoga class, or get a yoga DVD, a book, or a videotape and practice it at home. There are also yoga instructions available on the internet which you can search for.

Yoga Accessories

Yoga accessories are extremely useful as they make practicing yoga safer and more relaxing, even though not too many yoga accessories are needed. There are some items you cannot do without such as a yoga mat, yoga socks and shoes, pants and upper body wear.

There are other additional yoga accessories such as a water bottle, a bag to carry the yoga mat, yoga props, and DVDs for practicing alone, but these are optional and whether you buy them is up to you.

The upper body wear is very important as it has to make you feel comfortable. There will be no way you can relax and do yoga if your clothes are ill-fitting and uncomfortable. The upper body wear should ideally be made of a combination of lycra and cotton as these fabrics help absorb sweat, fit well, and give pores for proper circulation. During cold weather, wear comfortable pants which will not get in the way of your exercises.

They should not be too loose, or of a very thick material, as it will make you feel very hot when you're exercising. Apart from your t-shirt and jeans/pants, leave your jewelry and watch outside, to prevent them from hampering your yoga.

A yoga mat is an absolutely necessary yoga accessory. It serves as a cushion protecting you from the hard floors, and it is also hygienic as it prevents contact with the floor. Make sure the yoga mat stays clean as your body and head will have contact with it. People living in cold climates should ensure that their yoga mat stays flexible after it's kept in the trunk of the car, or after it's been exposed to the cold air.

Usually, yoga is practiced barefoot or variably in a pair of cotton socks. But experts say that wearing yoga shoes makes it more relaxing and comfortable. Yoga shoes are not the same as exercise shoes. They have thinner soles and are lighter at the top to facilitate air circulation.

Additionally, yoga shoes prevent bacteria and germs from forming and are important when you need to share a yoga mat. Moreover, the yoga shoes help maintain certain yoga postures and prevent you from slipping.

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Some people prefer to wear yoga socks to yoga shoes because they are like gloves for the feet. Toe socks with non-slip rubber dots are also available and these give friction, and they're a good buy.

A bag for your yoga accessories which will hold your mat, change of clothes, keys and wallet will help carrying your stuff to and from yoga class. Yoga props can help you with certain postures, and yoga DVDs can help you practice certain moves which you learnt in class. Water bottles are helpful but not really necessary as you'll sweat out all the toxins during yoga class.

You can get all the yoga accessories you need at yoga specialty retailers because of the wide range of stuff and also the staff will be well-informed about your yoga needs.

Yoga: Advantages

It is not the fact that people are not acquainted with the term 'yoga', but the actual scenario makes it clear that a large share of these people does not know too many things about it. It is at times thought to be a physical training for having a flexibility of limbs. But, yoga surpasses this narrow idea as it provides a through mental and physical fitness training. It is something that can help you in any aspects whatsoever of your life because, it is, after all, the mind and the body which stand as the backbones of a human being.

Due to its holistic approach, as mentioned earlier, yoga does not draw any demarcating line between the realm of mind and realm of body. Yoga does not make any distinction because, in the world of yoga, mind and body are the two integral parts of a whole, which cannot be separated.

'Asanas', a term, which we all are aware of, actually refers to those poses and postures through which an all-round training of mind and body are accomplished by yoga. This sort of training is something that can extend an aid as it exerts an improvement in your strength, stamina, flexibility, concentration and blood-circulation.

Not only that, it will also provide you with calmness and energy which would cut down your mental stress and help you doing your daily works with absolute ease.

Irrespective of the profession you are in- a housewife staying at home or a cashier in a grocery store or an athlete or office worker- yoga keeps helping you. It should not only be viewed as an end but it is to be treated as a means. Yoga can make you enabled to do, what you like to do, with much more perfection and contentment.

Yoga can be a good remedy in your injuries and illness but before starting up yoga or any exercise routine, you should consult with your doctor, especially, in case you do have any medical conditions.

In this regard, one thing can be assured that you should obviously try out yoga after making sure that you have consulted with your doctor. You should go for it because, at the worst, you

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may not like to continue and in that case you can put an end to it.

You will be getting a few options after you become well determined to start yoga. To contact with the local gym or yoga studio is the way that easily comes to one's mind but if you want to avail it more conveniently sitting at your home and spending less, the option of having a yoga DVD is always there to work as a guideline for you. It gives you the advantage of making your own routine. Notwithstanding this advantage, it has to be said that a gym or yoga studio is always a better option as it provides you with instant instruction.

Yoga: Tips On Position

Yoga has been in practice since a long time, and followers of yoga positions and continuous practitioner benefit by it through their mind, muscles and even the internal body systems. With time, its popularity has only shot up. But before one initializes it, one must have a fair idea of its impact to squeeze the most out of the yoga experience. So let's start with some tips before you begin with your mental and spiritual body set-up.

- **Continuous practice**

Yoga practice should be continuous, not only in the class under an expert teacher, but also at home, which will make the body and the mind feel at peace. For a newbie, regular practice will make the benefits more pronounced which will result in further involvement in yoga. In yoga, the number of times you practice your position is more important than the duration of each session that you enter into. A very minor part of your daily schedule, if devoted to yoga, can do you a world of good.

One important thing to remember while doing yoga is to get the positions right. Most of the TV shows and self-help books will suggest practicing yoga more often but what they skip to remind us is the right poses that one must strike while doing this exercise. Extending oneself more in each session will help, and one must not only practice the poses one is comfortable with, but also try to practice those with one he is struggling.

This will ensure that the practice session is more fertile and gives one the self-belief to do even better, and will make him realize that he's doing well.

- **Peaking your potential**

Getting rid you one's ego is one of the most important aspects for the novice. To give it the best shot to maximize the utility derived from the yoga exercise, one must not try to just make an impression on the teacher or the fellow learners. Self-study is the nucleus of yoga therapy. Instead of being an exact replica of the teacher or a good student, one must try to improvise and then maximize his own potential and benefits derived from the class.

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- **Who am I??**

One of the fundamental features of yoga is to remember oneself, remember who he is. Instead of going deep into his yoga poses, one must realize how deep he has actually evolved with the therapy, himself. Learning about one's inner attention is important in yoga. While practicing, with the aid of the guider, one must strive to use that attention and get most of his poses. It's only secondary if the physical position is not altogether perfect.

Yoga And Physical Health

Yoga does not see a distinction between the body and the mind; and this is an understanding that western psychology has also concluded for many years now (the link between mental health and physical health, and vice versa).

If you've come to this book looking to understand yoga as a means to help your body heal or improve, then please don't worry; you've come to the right place!

Yoga is indeed a process that involves releasing blocked tension and energy in the body, and helping make the muscles, tendons, joints, ligaments, and all other components work to their utmost potential.

Yoga believes that human beings are optimally designed, by nature, to be flexible and agile; and stiffness and lack of mobility only arrive when the body is unhealthy or out of alignment.

Therefore, countless people have found themselves in a yoga class, or on a yoga mat at home in front of a Yoga video or DVD, in the hopes of improving their physical health; and perhaps you may be one of them. If that's the case, then keep reading!

There are proven physical benefits of yoga, which include:

- * increased flexibility and range of motion
- * reduced pain in joints and muscles
- * stronger immune system
- * stronger lung capacity and therefore higher quality respiration
- * increased metabolism (which can lead to weight loss!)
- * higher quality of sleep (especially due to improved breathing and a more oxygenated body)

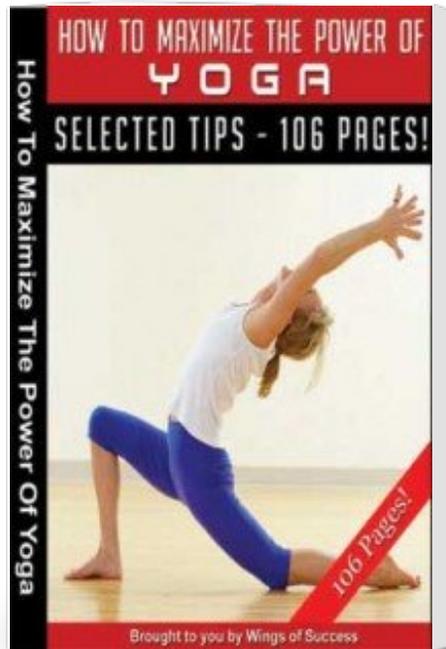
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Given that certain yoga practices require postures to be mastered, yoga has always helped promote the body's flexibility; it also helps in lubricating the joints, ligaments and tendons. Yoga detoxifies by increasing the flow of blood to various parts of the body. It helps tone and invigorate muscles that have grown flaccid and weak.

So please do keep in mind that, while yoga is often discussed in terms of its mental approach, there are clear and proven physical benefits that are a part of this approach.

Therefore, if weight loss is your goal, or the ability to shovel the snow in winter without having your back ache for days, then yoga is as viable an option to you as it is for the stressed-out corporate executive who needs to find a strategy for coping with the craziness of her busy life!

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