

# **Your Complete Guide to Yoga**

**What You Need to Know to Begin Yoga**

**<http://www.Yoga-Discipline.com>**

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## Introduction



Do you want to have a healthier body and mind? Do you want to lose weight, get in shape, and feel better about yourself? If any of these things sound good to you, have you ever considered learning yoga? There are many different reasons why a person would decide to learn how to do yoga, just like there are a wide variety of people out there that do it every day.

Yoga is a good way for people to relax both their body and mind. It will allow you to have a feeling of overall health and well-being. Yoga also helps to relieve depression which is becoming a huge problem for many people in the society we live in today. It can reduce stress which will help a person improve their concentration while reducing anxiety.

With yoga you can increase your flexibility while building muscle and bone strength. Yoga helps to decrease body fat which can help control your weight. Obesity is a large problem for a countless number of people and many of the diets available can cause other health issues. Yoga is a great solution to this ever growing problem.



Yoga includes many different exercises and stretches. Each one can affect your body and mind in different ways. This is why there are several different styles and types of yoga. Every individual has special needs and yoga has something for everyone.

Yoga gives each person an opportunity to listen to his or her own body and learn ways to improve as an individual. It helps to increase your energy levels instead of exhausting them like many other activities do. It is a great way to find inner peace, improve concentration and relieve stress while keeping your body in the best shape possible.

## What is Yoga?



Yoga has been around for a long time. People have some very wild and crazy ideas about what yoga actually is. Some people believe you have to be able to twist and turn your body in many different ways to perform yoga poses, still others think you have to stand on your head for long periods of time.

There are even some people who think you have to seclude yourself and spend hours chanting to perform yoga. These are just a few of the more common misconceptions surrounding yoga today. So considering yoga is not the things mentioned above then what exactly is Yoga.

No one knows for certain how or when yoga first began, but many believe it to be around five thousand years old. It was originally a way to relax the body and mind to a point where a person could meditate more easily through breathing exercises. A language called Sanskrit is where the name yoga originated and it means to join together or unite as one.

Yoga is a group of exercises that are believed to help your body, your mind and breathing all to connect together as one. If a person controls their breathing while holding their body in certain poses they can create harmony in their life. Yoga is a way for a person to balance their body, mind and emotions while relieving the stress that everyday life puts on them. Yoga helps people to find the quiet space within their own bodies.



Yoga is many different things combined into one. It teaches you how to use movement and certain postures along with special breathing techniques to help you establish a healthier way to live. Yoga teaches meditation which helps a person learn how to truly be relaxed. Indian culture has always believed that an individual's soul could connect with the divine. Since yoga's final stage is to make this type of connection, it has even been described as an Indian science.

The exercises or poses that are used in yoga will help you to tone your muscles and build body mass. The stretches you learn will make your muscles more flexible. Once you begin doing these exercises on a regular basis, you will see a difference in the way you control your weight, which in turn will make you look and feel better.

Yoga exercises also help you to relax your mind by relieving stress and making you feel happy and at peace. You will be able to handle any of the stressful situations that crosses your path more calmly and with ease. You will learn how to connect with your inner self to enjoy a peace many can only dream of having.

The breathing exercises will help to stimulate your mind which will greatly improve your concentration. You will be able to react quicker in any given situation. Deep breathing improves the circulation of blood throughout your entire body which cleanses you from the inside out.

The secret to yoga is being able to breathe slowly and deeply while maintaining certain body positions. Focusing only on what you are doing and leaving the rest of the world both out of sight and out of mind. Yoga is being able to calm your spirit while strengthening your body and mind.

Simply put, yoga is a way for a person to become mentally and physically healthier through the use of controlled breathing and body movements plus meditation. It is the ultimate way to have a happy healthy life.

## ***Yoga styles***



Yoga is made up of different styles, stages and types. Although there are several different styles of yoga, they all have a lot in common. The style is simply the way the yoga session is performed. In other words, it is the order in which you do the sessions.

The style is also determined by how much emphasis is placed on each part of the session. Some styles stress breathing more than poses, others put most of the emphasis on poses and meditation. Below is a list of the different styles and a brief description of what each one involves.

- Anada – This style combines the physical and spiritual aspects of yoga, it helps a person to prepare for meditation through the use of poses and exercises that relax your body.
  
- Ashtanga – This style consists of two hundred and forty poses that are done in six consecutive sets. These sets are connected together by your breathing. It is important that you stay

consecutive when doing Ashtanga yoga to create heat that cleanses your body.

- Integral – When doing Integral yoga, both the poses and your controlled breathing follows a set pattern that is part of a seventy-five minute session. Forty-five minutes of this session is spent in deep relaxation followed by a breathing session and finally meditation. This style of yoga is the most traditional approach that benefits all characteristics of a person.
  
- Iyengar – This yoga style is most widely used in the western world. Iyengar yoga concentrates on correcting the structural imbalance in a person's physical body. The feet, hands and pelvis areas along with the spine, arms and leg positions are very important parts of this style.

Because of the care that is taken in receiving the correct positions the classes are usually very slow and may last for long periods of time. Specific breathing techniques are not stressed but breathing is still important and needs to be done correctly. However, your standing postures are stressed as being a very important part of this style. Iyengar yoga relies on props such as wooden blocks, benches, blankets and straps to help perform different positions.

- Kripalu – Kripalu is a style of yoga that mostly stresses the student's mental and emotional state while the student is performing different poses. These poses are held for long periods of time to allow the student to find and release emotional and spiritual blocks. It is a form of yoga that is inner directed towards three stages.

These stages are classified as willful, will and surrender and finally surrendering to the body's wisdom. Each stage has poses that are done in three separate phases that are based according to the person's level. You can start out in a gentle stage then move to a moderate stage. The third and last stage is a vigorous one in which spontaneous poses is encouraged to help increase the body's internal awareness.

- Kundalini – Kundalini yoga involves breathing techniques, posture, meditation and chanting. Through the use of these different techniques, a person brings out the reservoir of energy that is stored at the base of the spine. Many of the breathing techniques such as alternate nostril breathing and slow diaphragmatic breathing are emphasized greatly when doing this style of yoga. It also uses a very energetic breathing technique called "breath of fire".

- Sivananda – Five methods will apply when you perform Sivananda yoga. They are proper exercise, breathing, deep relaxation, vegetarian diet and of course positive thinking with meditation. In this style, you do follow a standard format that is based on a particular routine. This routine includes breathing exercises, sun salutations, twelve classic postures, short mantra chant and prayer. The prayers always begin and end each yoga class that is being held.
  
- Viniyoga – Viniyoga is a style of yoga that is a cross between Iyengar and Ashtanga yoga. The basic rule for Viniyoga is that the study of yoga should be done in an organized fashion. A Viniyoga session includes asana, pranayama, meditation, book study, counseling, imagery, prayer and chants. These exercises are made to fit the specific need of the person doing them.

Before you begin one of these classes, a teacher will look at your specific body type, emotional needs, cultural heritage and interest. Using this information, they will construct a session just for you. Viniyoga focuses most of its attention to the spine and your breathing is considered more important than your posture. Both your breathing and your posture are coordinated together to seem as one. The way you inhale and exhale are done

at different length and intervals. Normally classes are taught on an individual basis to allow time to cover all of the special needs of the student.

### ***Stages of yoga***



There are as many stages of yoga as there are styles. The stages are the steps used from the day you begin yoga until the time you reach perfect harmony with the universe. The different stages of yoga makes a person reflect on themselves. They have to be honest with themselves to complete a stage. To do this you have to accept yourself for whom you really are. This is the first step to changing and acquiring harmony in your life. Listed below are the eight stages of yoga.

- Yama – Yama is a person’s moral values or the things you believe in. This includes how you feel about lying, stealing, violent behavior and greed.

- Niyama –Niyama is self discipline and spiritual development. It is ceremonial sessions where the person tries to receive purity, self control and devotion.
  
- Asana – Once you have succeeded in conquering the first two stages then it is time to prepare your body and mind to make it a temple for meditation. You do this through the use of poses that are also called Asana.
  
- Pranayama –Pranayama can be translated as “life force” and it simply means for a person to get control over their breathing. This is a very important stage in yoga and must be mastered before moving on to the next stage.
  
- Pratyahara – Pratyahara is the stage that is great for people that have to deal with a lot of pain caused by serious medical problems or pain resulting from an injury. This stage requires a person to look towards the inside of their body while removing their minds from anything connected to the outside world.
  
- Dharana – Now that your body has been prepared for meditation, it is now time to prepare your mind through the stage of Dharana. It requires an extended amount of concentration to achieve this level of yoga.

- Dhyana – Dhyana is the stage of yoga where you are physically and mentally ready to achieve complete meditation.
- Samadhi – Samadhi is the last step of yoga and is considered to be the one that most people will never complete. It is considered the ultimate peace and joy that a person could ever acquire. In a way, it could be described as a type of bonding with the universe.

### ***Types of yoga***



There are many different types of yoga that are practiced in the world we live in today. We will discuss the six main types of yoga which focuses on the specific aspects of a person. Below are the names and a description of each of these six types of yoga.

- Hatha – Hatha focuses on a person’s physical well-being. Part of this type of yoga consists of specific postures, breathing techniques and meditation.

- Raja – Raja is the highest form of yoga where meditation is the focal point of the sessions.
  
- Karma – Karma is a type of Yoga that believes a person's past does affect their present. Based on this belief a person can shape their future by the way they live in the present.
  
- Bhakti – Bhakti is a type of yoga that helps a person to accept and deal with other people they meet under any condition. It teaches a person how to control and channel their emotions in a positive way.
  
- Jnana – Jnana is described as the yoga of the mind and wisdom. In this type of yoga, a person studies and learns scriptures about yoga and its traditions.
  
- Tantra – Tantra is a type of yoga that encourages a person toward a ritual way of living. It teaches you how to be a follower of these rituals with a respectful attitude towards them.

One of the great things about yoga is that you can combine the different types and styles of yoga together to create the perfect yoga session for you. A

specific session can be made to suit any person's needs regardless of their lifestyle or their personal situation.



Hatha yoga is the most common type of yoga practiced today. It is so popular because it uses a combination of poses, movements, breathing techniques, concentration and relaxation to help the body to have complete health mentally and physically. It is a great way to help relax your mind while getting your body in the best shape possible.

### ***What is Chakras***



To understand the principle of yoga you need to understand Chakras. Chakra is another word for a body's center of nerves which is thought to be located in your spinal column. The chakra is the cosmic energy that is believed to reach all the way to a person's soul.

One main principal of yoga is to awaken the cosmic energy that is located in the chakras. By awakening this energy, people can completely learn themselves. This would be the only way to reach inner peace and be connected to your soul.

Chakra is what makes each person an individual; it is what determines your personality and unique character. It is what makes you happy or sad, loving and caring or distance and unforgiving. Chakra determines your moral believes and actions by tapping into the cosmic energy that is found in every person.

Of course, you can not see chakra but once you have become an advanced student by learning different stages of yoga you will understand the principal of it. You must reach the point where the chakras are activated to be able to reach perfect health and harmony in all areas of your life.



There are eleven types of chakras out of which seven are vital to reaching your goal of happiness. Sahasrara is the most important of all the chakras because it is where your energy unites with the soul. Chakras are

spread through your body by nadis, which is another word for channels that are located along the spine.

Yoga awakens the chakras activating the nadis and sends this divine energy throughout the entire body by using these channels. There are many things that stand in the way of a persons happiness but six of them are linked directly to the chakras, they are:

1. Envy
2. Greed
3. Infatuation
4. Desire
5. Anger
6. Pride

The only way to overcome these obstacles is by understanding the chakras and taking your yoga sessions seriously. By awakening the chakras in your body, you will reach a state of self-realization that can change your life forever. You will be happier and healthier than you ever realized possible.

## Waking up the Spine



What does it mean to wake up the spine? Have you ever had trouble standing straight or bending over because of stiffness in your back when you first woke up in the morning? If so, then you know how hard it is to get motivated and leave for work. Even if you stay at home, you may find it difficult starting your day. Sometimes it may be several hours before you can move comfortable only to find that as soon as you rest a bit the stiffness returns.

Waking up your spine simple means doing yoga exercises that help to reduce or eliminate this stiffness and pain. However, there are more benefits to waking up the spine than just eliminating stiffness. By performing yoga exercises created for the spine, you increase the circulation of the spinal fluids that allow you to think more clearly. You can make more sound judgments and have more confidence in those judgments.

Your energy levels will increase because you are stimulating the vertebrates in your spine. You will no longer give out of energy long before

your day is finished. You may even find that you feel more like participating in extra activities after the work day is finished than you ever have before.

Back injuries are a problem for many people. They may have to do a lot of heavy lifting at their workplace or just a lot of twisting and turning on a daily basis. If you are physically out of shape, it is very easy to injury your back. Waking up your spine helps to keep it flexible which helps to reduce the risk of having a back injury.



Twists and stretches are exercises that help to increase the flow of blood to the nerves surrounding the spine which helps to increase the flow of energy surrounding the spinal cord. These exercises help the spine to become more limber which helps to eliminate stiffness and aids in creating flexibility.

Two other yoga exercises that are great for waking up the spine would be Spinal Flexes and the Cobra. Spinal Flexes help stimulate the lower and mid part of the spine helping it to become supple, while the Cobra is good for removing tension in the lower back.

Mornings are a good time to perform these exercises because it can help you feel better and more energized throughout your busy day. If mornings are too hectic and you just don't have the time, then they can be done in the evenings and still produce some satisfactory results.

## A Beginner's Program



Yoga is for everyone regardless of your age, sex or health. It also has many other qualities in its favor. For instance, yoga can be fun and creative while teaching a person self discipline. It is a combination of poses and exercises that can help a young person keep and improve their flexibility, while helping to retain mobility and relieve arthritis and poor circulation in older people.

Yoga can help you improve your skills in other activities such as golf, bicycling, skiing, football, and soccer. Whatever your interest may be, yoga can help you be ready for them by being mentally and physically prepared. It can even help you in the workplace by teaching you how to be more relaxed and prepared for the day.

Another great thing about yoga is that you do not have to be in excellent shape to begin a session. It can be started on anyone's level while gradually working up to more complicated poses and sessions. Yoga is not about how quickly you can do it or how many poses you can perform, it is about getting your body in alignment so it can work together as one smooth flow of energy.

When you first begin yoga, you need to sit aside a specific time that you will have each day to perform the sessions. You need to allow plenty of time for this session while choosing a time where there will be no interruptions. Consistency is the key to yoga so you need to stay with it on a regular schedule without any form of distractions.



If you are performing yoga at home, don't allow anything to distract you from your sessions. This would include distractions from other family members, pets, television, radios and phone calls. Make sure the time you set aside will be a time of complete privacy.

Either yoga can be done indoors or outdoors, it's your preference. Although, you will need to make sure that the place you choose is open with plenty of room. You can begin by taking classes from a professional instructor, or learn yoga on your own at home. If you are unfamiliar with yoga then it may be best to join a class when you first begin to have a qualified instructor help teach you the correct way of performing yoga.

If you decide to pursue yoga on your own, then there are many books and other information available that can help you while getting started. More information in this area has been provided for you in a later chapter. If you have any medical conditions that limit certain movements and you feel you may need individual attention, you can consider hiring a private instructor to help you perform your sessions.

It is not good for a person to do yoga when they have just finished eating a meal. Your sessions should be scheduled at a time between your regular meals and avoid snacking just before or after a session. It is best to do yoga when your body is limber not stiff if possible. Remember when you first begin yoga sessions take it slow. It is just as with any other type of exercise if you overdo it, you can make your body and muscles extremely sore.



Always keep your health in mind. If you have any health risk that may prohibit the use of a certain pose, be sure to adjust your sessions accordingly. The fact that any session can be personalized to fit anyone's needs is one of the great things about yoga. It would also be advised to consult your doctor before beginning a yoga program especially if you do have special needs.

If you feel pain when doing yoga then there is a problem somewhere. You may be trying to do a pose that is too hard for you at this time, or simply pushing too hard. It is also a possibility that you are doing the pose incorrectly, so if you feel pain, stop and reevaluate your situation.

If you are really tired or sick stop for now and try again when your body has had time to rest or when you feel better. Always listen to what your body is telling you. If you just feel a little uncomfortable that's okay, but you should never feel pain.



Learn how to do all exercises correctly; doing them wrong could result in not only discomfort but also injury. Especially take care to protect your head, neck and spine. Exercises like shoulder stands, head stands and the plow can cause serious injury if done incorrectly.

It is also important that you are in good health when performing many of the yoga exercises. For example, if you are suffering from migraine headaches or back pain then you should avoid doing shoulder stands. Some of the special breathing techniques should be avoided if you suffer from asthma

or bronchitis. If you have high blood pressure or heart problems then you should avoid inverted postures.

Doing some of the postures that require you to be in a crossed legged position can be bad for varicose veins and if you suffer from a hernia, you may experience problems when doing forward bends. These are just examples to give you an idea of how your current physical condition affects you when doing yoga.

There are a few rules you should follow when participating in a yoga session. For example, you should always wear clothes that are comfortable and easy to move in. Clothing that is too big will get in the way making it uncomfortable to perform many of the poses, while clothing that is too small will restrict movement. No special shoes are required for yoga; in fact, it is better if you do the sessions in your bare feet.

It is best to avoid chewing gum while performing yoga as this could create problems and be a distraction. Know your body and don't force it to do postures that are too hard and uncomfortable for you. Don't ever get in a hurry when performing yoga; you should always take your time. You have to remember yoga is something that is a life-long commitment. With time, you will become more flexible and get better. It is important to try and stay relaxed at all times.

A normal yoga session usually follows a certain pattern. The reason for this is because doing the session in a specific order enhances the effect of the session. Normally you will start with the warm-up exercises, followed by standing poses.

Sitting poses would most likely come next to allow your body time to relax considering many of the standing poses can be exhausting to perform. After this, you have twist exercises and inverted poses. Backbends and forward bends are usually done next. At the end of each session, you will have a relaxation period.

Of course, since yoga can be custom made for each individual person this pattern will vary some. Once you have set aside a special time for your session you can use the outline in the following sections to begin your yoga program.

### ***Warming up***



Above are listed many of the special circumstances that affect anyone who is interested in beginning yoga. Once you have established your special

needs, if any, then you are ready to begin your sessions. Since Hatha is the most common type of yoga we will base the following instructions on that type.

It is recommended that you begin your yoga session by doing warm up poses regardless of how long or short the session will be. These exercises stretch the body's arms, legs, and spine to help prevent the possibility of injury. Deep breathing exercises are also essential when doing warm-up.

Begin your routine with these warm-up exercises:

- Figure-eight – This exercise is for limbering up your neck muscles. To do this warm-up exercise you stand up straight and basically draw a figure eight with your head by moving it from side to side.
- Shoulder Rotations – To perform this warm-up you simply roll your shoulders in a backward circle while leaving your arms hanging loosely. This exercise is to help you loosen up your shoulder muscles.
- Sun Salutations – When doing sun salutations you stand with your feet together and your hands in front of you in a prayer position. Exhale while in this position and then inhale while

stretching your arms up and arching your back at the waist. Keep your legs straight and relax your neck while doing this exercise.

- Mountain – This is a pose where you learn how to be motionless while standing erect and concentrating on two imaginary lines running from the center of your body. One goes to the top of your head while the other reaches to the bottom of your feet. This is the position where other poses get their start. A person learns to be perfectly still and relax while performing this exercise.
  
- Downward Facing Dog – This is a great stretch that benefits your whole body. It helps to relieve stress while energizing your body. Start with your hands and knees on the floor, exhale while lifting your knees from the floor keeping them slightly bent with your heels up in the beginning. As you are moving your pelvis upward, slowly push your thighs back while stretching your heels down toward the floor, exhale while straightening your knees.
  
- Forward Bends – To do a forward bend you should stand with your feet together and parallel with your shoulders. Have your arms at your sides. Keep your legs straight while bending

forward at the hips. Slowly lower the top half your body down while stretching the palms of your hands towards the floor. Remember to keep your head up and stay in the stretched position for several seconds. You can increase the length of time you hold the pose as you become more experienced. Exhale as you are going in the downward position and inhale as you are coming up out of it.



Remember that all warm-up exercises should be done in a slow organized fashion. Never bounce or push farther than your body is able to go comfortably. How many times you perform an exercise is not as important as how well you perform it. Make sure that you take the time needed to learn the proper way to perform all warm-up exercises in complete detail before attempting them. The same is true for the poses that will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Poses



The poses done in a yoga session is what makes yoga unique from other forms of exercises. They are done in a smooth orderly fashion that allows the body to benefit from each individual motion. You need to concentrate on your breathing while performing each pose and they should never be rushed through. Take time to work on your technique for every pose.

There are a lot of different poses used in yoga. One important thing to remember about these poses is that different ones affect and create moods and energy differently. This is why it may be better to do certain poses in the mornings and other ones in the evening.

For example, sun salutations, backbends and standing poses can be more stimulating and should be done early enough to not affect your sleep at night. These poses help to energize the body. Poses that help relax you like forward bends, inversions and restorative are best done late in the evening.

Since many of the yoga poses are derived from animals and insects, it is a great idea to try and visualize them in these positions before performing the pose during practice. This visualization can help you concentrate and perform the pose better. Using visualization techniques while breathing deeply can help you perform yoga poses in a slow orderly fashion.

There are several major groups of poses such as the ones listed below. In each group, there are different types of exercises that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

- Standing Poses – These exercises help to strengthen your back while stretching and building leg and hip muscles. They help to improve the progress of blood circulation and aid in digestion. Standing poses can also help tone the cardiovascular system helping to prevent heart disease.
  
- Inversions – Because these exercises seem to defy gravity, they are great for improving coordination and helping one to become graceful and poised. They can also help you learn how to focus and concentrate. This is because while performing these poses, organs such as the heart, lungs and brain are flushed with blood revitalizing them.

- Twists – If you suffer from back pain these exercises are great for helping to relieve this pain by reducing the tension on your spine. They also aid in the circulation of blood and nutrients in your body. Twists are also helpful in making your shoulders more flexible.
  
- Sitting Poses – These poses help you to achieve a calm feeling and are used with deep breathing exercises. They also help add energy and strength to the spine by increasing the flow of blood through your body. Since they help to relieve tension in the diaphragm, sitting poses make breathing easier.
  
- Backbends – This exercise will aid in the flexibility of your spine and relieve tension in the front part of your body. They also help to stimulate the nervous system. They can help prevent headaches and nervous tension which leads to exhaustion.
  
- Forward Bends – By doing forward bends you compress the abdominal organs which affect the nervous system by reducing the heart rate and blood pressure. Because of the position that you put your body in when doing a forward bend, the heart can easily pump blood throughout your entire body. This helps to rejuvenate every part of your body.



There is a lot more to poses than it may appear at first so it is important to learn them completely before performing them. One very important rule to remember about poses is not to hold your breath when you are doing them. Although, you can take and hold a couple of deep breaths in-between each pose to help relax you if you find it more comfortable.

Sequencing is a word that means you will be moving from one pose into another without interrupting the rhythm or form you are using. You use sequencing when you are trying to work on a specific area of your body at a given time. This process can be used to either energize or relax your body depending on the area you are sequencing.

The poses and movements that you do while you are performing yoga have several major impacts on your body. The poses not only tone body muscles that can be seen but they also can help tone internal body organs which cannot be seen.

Poses that energize your body help to improve blood circulation that can help heal the inside of your body. Your internal cells are revived and your

nervous system can be restored to a calm state. Holding particular poses at specific times is what helps to cause this reaction.



Poses that help to calm and relax your body also help to relax your mind. This is important in maintaining a healthy body. If you stay in a condition where you are upset, worried or nervous your body cannot function normally. It causes you to become anxious and untrusting of your own feelings. Yoga can help you change these feelings.

Generally, when you first begin yoga poses they should be held for approximately one minute. Then you gradually work up to longer lengths of time. If you find it is uncomfortable to hold some of the poses for a minute, start off with what is comfortable for you then move up slowly.

The purpose of holding a pose is to allow the blood flow to stay in that area as long as possible. The longer you hold the pose the more healing can take place in those areas making that part of your body stronger. The more you practice yoga poses the stronger and more relaxed you will feel.

## ***Performing Different Poses***



After the warm-ups you are ready to continue with the rest of your yoga session. The next stage is performing the poses designed for your session. Remember that it is very important to make sure you perform these poses correctly. Below is a list of different poses and instructions on how to perform them. You begin with the standing poses.

### **Standing Poses**



When beginning any of the standing poses you start by standing completely straight with your hands down by your side. Have your palms turned inward towards your thighs. Keep your feet together pointing forward and stand flat not on your heels or toes. Breathe evenly while performing these poses and make the transition from one movement to next with smooth motions.

- Triangle Pose – Begin in the standing position then inhale deeply while jumping up and landing with your feet about four foot apart. As you land, your feet should stay in position by remaining pointing forward. At the same time, raise your arms up to your shoulder level. Continue looking straight ahead. At this point, you should turn your right foot slightly inward. While keeping the left leg stretched, turn your left foot to a ninety degree angle. Hold for a minute then reverse sides.
  
- Warrior Pose – Start this pose by inhaling deeply while jumping outward landing with your feet about four foot apart with arms extended. Have the palms of your hands facing down and in a straight line with your body. Next, you need to concentrate on pulling the inside of your legs upward while pressing the outside of your foot towards the floor.

Exhale and turn your right leg to a ninety degree angle while your left foot is turning somewhat to the right. Inhale a deep breath then while exhaling bend your right knee while keeping your right thigh parallel to the floor. Turn your head to the right while stretching the arches of both feet. Hold this pose while breathing smoothly. Resume the standing position and repeat sides.

- Side Angle Stretch Pose – Begin in the standing position and inhale while jumping apart with your arms out to your sides. Have your palms facing the floor while stretching your arms. Keep your feet in line and pointing forward. Slowly exhale while rotating your right foot to a ninety degree angle and turn your left foot slightly to the right.

Stretch your left leg while letting your weight rest on your heel. Form a right angle by bending your right knee then breathe a few times. Next, exhale while placing your right palm beside your foot and extending your left arm directly over your head. Look upward at your left arm while holding the pose, then resume the original position and reverse sides.

- Chest Stretch Pose – Start in the standing position and begin by rotating your arms to loosen the muscles, then place your arms behind your back, put your fingertips together and have them pointing upward. If this is too difficult for you to do then simply place your palms on opposite elbows. The object is to push your shoulders backwards to expand your chest. Inhale while jumping up and extending your feet apart when landing.

When your weight is distributed evenly, exhale slowly. Inhale while turning your right foot to a ninety degree angle to the right

while rotating your body to the right from your waist. Keep your body in line with your right leg while tilting your head and chest in an upward position. Next, you want to exhale while bending forward keeping your knees straight and come to rest with your chin on your right knee. Resume the original position and reverse sides.

- Forward Stretch – In the standing position, raise your arms up with your palms facing forward. Take a couple breaths while stretching towards the sky. Exhale and bend forward at the waist and place your palms on the floor. If you cannot reach the floor comfortably, then stretch as far as you can. Move your hands backwards towards your heels while raising your palms off the floor. Exhale and push your chest inward until your chin touches your knees. Breathe slowly while holding this pose then resume the standing position and repeat.

### **Sitting Poses**



Sitting poses should follow the standing poses and are great for people that suffer from problems such as arthritis in the knees, ankles and legs. They

are also a great way to improve your sitting posture by teaching you how to keep your spine straight.

- Lotus Pose – Start by sitting on the floor in a cross leg position. Use your hands to hold your left foot and bring it up onto your right thigh. Do the same with the right foot crossing it over the left leg and placing it on the left thigh. Hold for a minute and then uncross your legs and begin with the opposite foot.
  
- Hero Pose – Start in a cat pose with your hands down while keeping your knees the same width apart as your hips. Separate your feet until they are slightly wider than your hips allowing your hips to fit between them. Keep your feet straight not pointing inward or outward. Your buttocks should sit firmly onto the floor but if it is painful to do so, then you can use a folded blanket until it becomes comfortable. Continue to sit up straight while resting your hands on your lap. Close your eyes and relax for at least one minute while relaxing your shoulders.
  
- Cobra Pose – Start in a sitting position then stretch out into the plank position, place your chest and chin on the floor keeping your elbows next to your thighs and your hips up high. Lower your hips and press your feet into the floor. Slide your chest forward while keeping your hands stationary. Roll your

shoulders backwards while lifting your chest high. Keep your rib cage lowered to the floor.

### **Twist Poses**



Twist poses are a great way to increase the flexibility of your spine. Begin doing twist poses by sitting or kneeling in the floor. Remember to concentrate on your breathing while performing these exercises.

- Half Spinal Twists – In this pose, you kneel on your legs with them placed together and your buttocks are resting on your heels. Next, move over until you are sitting to the right side of your feet. Take your left leg and place it over the right with your foot against the outside of your right knee.

Keep your spine straight while performing this exercise. Straighten your arms to the sides and twist around to the left. Bring your right arm down and to the outside of the left knee and place your left hand on the floor. Exhale and twist as far to the left as possible.

- Torso Stretch – To perform this twist pose you need to sit on the floor with your palms behind you and placed flat on the floor. Put your legs

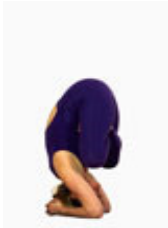
together and bend your knees while moving them to the left of your body. Have your knees and thighs facing forward while breathing evenly. Next, clasp your ankles and bring your shins in until they touch your hip. Keep your torso straight while performing this action.

Exhale while turning your torso to the right placing your right palm on the floor and your left palm on your right knee. Rotate to place the left side of your body in line with your right thigh. Turn your head to the right, inhale and hold for a few seconds. Next exhale and rotate your spine to the right side. Hold this position for a few seconds then relax.

- Spinal Twist – Begin by sitting on a blanket that is folded while pulling your right foot up to your right buttock. Place your hands flat on the floor beside of you. Exhale while making a ninety degree turn to the right; next move your left shoulder forward. Place your left arm on the outside of your right knee and stretch the arm towards the left foot.

Balance your weight with your right foot while exhaling and wrapping your left arm around your knee towards your back. While twisting from your waist lift your right hand from the floor and twist it toward your back till it reaches the fingers on your left hand. Slowly stretch until you can hold your left wrist with your right hand while tilting your head to the left. Hold for a few seconds then release and reverse sides.

## Inversion poses



These poses are called inversions because you are placing your body in an unusual upside down position. However, they are very stimulating and can make a big difference in the way you feel and the amount of energy you have.

- **Shoulder Stands** – Start by lying flat on your back with your feet together. Bring your legs up to a right angle while inhaling. Place your hands under your buttocks and exhale while lifting your body upward. Slide your hands down your back while pushing your body into position. Continue to raise your body until you come to rest on your shoulders. Keep your legs straight while breathing normally. Hold position for a few seconds then let your feet drop halfway to the floor then unroll your body back to the lying flat position.
- **Plough Pose** – Begin by inhaling and going into a shoulder stand then exhale while lowering your feet to the floor behind you. Lay your arms flat while resting your toes on the floor behind your head. Hold, then slowly lift your feet off the floor and roll into a corpse pose and relax.

- Headstands – Kneel on the floor while leaning forward and placing your elbows on the floor. Make sure to keep the distance between your elbows less than the width of your shoulders. Form a cup by interlocking your fingers while your hands are resting on the floor. Next place the crown of your head on the floor inside of your cupped hands. Make sure that the crown of your head is the part that is resting on the floor and not the front or back side of your head.

Hold this position while breathing smoothly then push up onto the balls of your feet. Keep your torso perpendicular with the floor. Next, bring your knees into your chest while exhaling. Then slowly raise your knees upward until they are pointing towards the sky. Hold here for a few seconds while breathing smoothly then straighten the legs upward until you are in a vertical line.

## **Forward and Backbends**



Forward bends and backbends can be done from either a seated position or a standing position. However the two listed below are done while in a seated position. Remember to concentrate on your breathing while performing these poses.

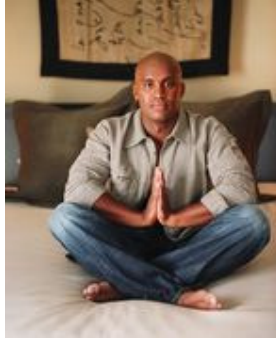
- Forward Bends - The seated forward bend seems like it would be simple to do but actually doing it correctly could take some practice. Start by lying on your back and inhale as you come up to a sitting position. Keep your toes pointing upward and stretch your arms upward.

Pull in your abdomen, exhale and bend forward. Keep your back straight and bring your chin towards your shins. Do not bend from the middle of your spine. Bring your arms forward as you bend, reach and hold whatever part of your legs that is comfortable without bending your knees.

- Bow Pose – This is a backbend pose that is done by lying on your stomach with your head down. Inhale while bending your knees up, reach back while holding your ankles with your hands. Hold this position while exhaling and then inhale while raising your head and chest. At the same time, pull your ankles upward enough to lift your knees and thighs off the floor.

If you suffer from any medical problem, remember to adjust these poses according to your condition. You can also use the aid of props to help you in many of the poses. You have almost completed your yoga session there is just one step left, the relaxation stage.

## **Relaxation**



Not only is it important to warm up before a session it is also necessary to have a relaxation period at the end of each session to help relax your muscles. Always take a few moments after a session to relax your body. Below is listed two great poses to use when in the relaxation stage of your session.

- Full Supine Poses - Begin this pose by laying flat on your back with your arms and legs straight, your toes should be pointed outward and the palms of your hands should be pressed together. Inhale while stretching out and exhale while bringing your knees up and your arms down and wrap them around your knees. Bring your chin in toward your chest. You should do three to five rounds.
  
- Corpse Pose - The Corpse Pose is much as the name says. You lie on your back keeping your body very still. Observe your breathing while in this position looking for irregularities. Concentrate on keeping your breathing slow and smooth while

in this pose. Keep your eyes closed and your chin forward. Your feet should be apart with your toes pointing out. Imagine yourself floating above the floor, then mentally slowly begin to return to the floor starting from your toes and work your way up to the top of your head. While doing this pose also imagine a sense of overall well-being, you will feel a difference when this exercise has been completed.

The Corpse Pose is a great exercise for achieving a sense of relaxation. Performing many of the other poses may cause your body to feel fatigued. Ending a session with the Corpse Pose will make you feel revived and energized. Understanding why relaxing your body and mind is so important will help you to understand why this part of the yoga session is so essential.

There are actually two areas that you need to work on when you are in a relaxation stage. One of them would be your physical body which can be achieved with the exercises listed above. Your muscles will have an opportunity to relax after your workout and rejuvenate themselves. It will help your body to feel energized and ready for the rest of the day.

The other area that you are working on when in the relaxation period would be your mental state. It is just as important to be relaxed mentally as it is to relax your muscles and body.

Relaxation is described as the act or state of being relaxed. Without some form of relaxation, many people find themselves so stressed they cannot cope with their everyday life. Different people do different things to try and relax. Some go fishing while others take exotic vacations.

The problem with these ideas is that although they may start out great, many times something will happen to create more stress instead of creating a relaxing environment. A fishing trip could be ruined by something as simple as a rain storm and many things could go wrong with a vacation trip.

In yoga, relaxation is a condition of complete openness where your body can renew itself through breathing. This is why practicing yoga is a great way to truly relax. You will not have to deal with unexpected problems occurring while you are in a session, so it actually gives your body time to rejuvenate itself.

This is something that every person could use in his or her life. Individuals get so wrapped up in the world around them that sometimes they feel overwhelmed and like they just can not continue on. Many times people will resort to taking medication to try and feel relaxed but unfortunately, this really doesn't solve the problem either. To relax your body you need to slow down and revive your mind, giving it a chance to heal itself naturally. Yoga provides an excellent way of doing this.



A relaxation period can include visualization where you spend your time thinking about peaceful images. The meditation you learn to perform helps you to empty your mind of all thoughts which allows your mind to heal itself. This part of yoga helps to increase the amount of calmness you feel and restore your energy to new levels.

Relaxation and concentration go hand in hand. When your body and mind are truly relaxed, you will notice that you can concentrate much better. Everything will seem easier and making decisions will come without difficulty. You will have more confidence in the decisions that you make and you will have an atmosphere about you that others will wish they could achieve.

Relaxation will help to restore your mental state, allowing you to make decisions with a clear head and good judgment. You will have more self-confidence and be able to handle yourself in difficult situations. Spiritual relaxation will clear your mind allowing you to reach an inner peace that you never knew existed.

## Breathing



You can't have yoga without having proper breathing techniques. Deep breathing is the key to helping yoga be so beneficial. It helps to strengthen your lungs which help to aid in the circulation of oxygen to the brain. When your brain is supplied with more oxygen, you can think more clearly and feel less tense.

All of your yoga sessions will be starting off with controlled breathing that is continued throughout the whole session, including the relaxation stage. Yoga breathing is said to clear any blocked energy a person may have by producing *prana* which circulates throughout the whole body.

You must always put a lot of focus and attention on your breathing when doing any yoga session. This helps your body to relax and helps it to begin to heal itself. Yoga breathing exercises are great for strengthening your lungs and are believed to help cleanse your entire body.

Yoga deep breathing can help to relieve what is called nervous tension, which can cause many people to suffer from migraine headaches. Yoga breathing is a good way to relieve this pain without a lot of medication. Are

you are going through a difficult time where your emotions are uncontrollable? If so, then deep breathing yoga exercises is a way to help control these emotions and redirect your energy to more positive areas.



Before your warm-ups you can start your yoga session with deep breathing exercises. You should focus on your spine as being the center of your body. You start by sitting in a cross-legged position and begin breathing deep from your stomach. While doing this, imagine your breath is running up your spine till it reaches the top of your head then back down again. Breaths should be as deep as possible while still being comfortable and done slowly with complete concentration.

To be able to perform breathing techniques you need to know a few basic rules. The most important thing to remember is to always be conscious of how you are breathing. Since breathing comes naturally without having to think about it, you may not realize there are different ways to breathe. It is extremely important to train yourself to breathe correctly.

If you don't take time to think about breathing and do not learn how to do it correctly, you will not achieve your goals in yoga. Concentrate on what

breathing is doing for your body. This will help you to learn different breathing techniques that will be very beneficial.

Breathing correctly means breathing from your diaphragm. When you do this, your chest muscles remain still while there is a slight movement in your lower abdomen. Breathing correctly can greatly affect your nervous system and mind and is required for your success in achieving meditation.

The way you feel affects the way you breathe. If you are excited or afraid, you will take short, fast breaths. If you are calm and very relaxed then you will have long deep breaths. Therefore, by controlling the way you breathe you can also control the way you feel.

Achieving proper breathing techniques help to relax your mind and body helping you to feel better and more peaceful. Your breathing will become smooth, slow and quite without signs of shallowness. This allows your mind and body to follow this same path creating harmony in your life.

## **Need for practice**



As with anything a person does, the more you practice the better you can become. In yoga, practice means becoming more aware of your body and its needs. You will learn how to look inward at your body instead of just the outside of it. It will teach you how to trust your own abilities. Once you have embraced this new found confidence you will feel better about yourself in all areas.

This is especially great for teens that have so many things to deal with. People seem to be pulling them in so many different directions sometimes it is hard for them to know what to do. When they perform regular yoga practices, they will be less susceptible to give into peer pressure because they are confident in their own decisions.

The more you practice yoga the closer you come to reaching a higher plane of existence that will allow you to experience true peace and understanding. It will make you a happier person who can share this happiness with others. It gives you a chance to see a different perspective on problems that affect your everyday life. You will no longer be limited to dealing with these encounters just on the physical plane instead; you can have a new understanding of them.



Practice also helps you to keep your mind clear and free from negative thoughts and impressions. This will help you to have a positive outlook on life. Having a positive outlook helps to build your self-confidence and will give you more control of your life. It will help you to stay calm and relaxed in stressful situations. Without regular practice sessions, you will begin to drift back into the worries of the world and begin feeling frustrated and disorganized.

Regular practice is also necessary for keeping your muscles flexible and your body in shape. It will help to eliminate stiffness in your joints and help you to feel more energized and ready for the day ahead of you. By only practicing once in a while, you are denying yourself the opportunity of being in the best overall shape possible.



If you are practicing yoga in a group, never worry about what someone else can do. If you begin focusing on how well the person beside of you is

doing and try to compete with them, you will be missing a big part of what yoga is all about. It is not a competition and staying focused on yourself is how you achieve your goals.

If you are practicing with a personal trainer, make sure they have your best interest at hand. If they seem to be too pushy and do not give you time to learn the poses correctly, then you may need a new instructor. Remember, yoga sessions should never be hurried through and the techniques should be learned completely before performing them.

It is important to be consistent with your practices but keep in mind that these sessions are not written in stone. If you are sick then you should adjust your practice sessions to accommodate this factor.

## Diet and Sleep



Your diet is a big part of your life and is more important than many people realize. The foods that you eat affect the way you feel. Overeating is bad for your body, not only does it make you overweight but it also makes you feel slow and tired both physically and mentally. A proper diet is definitely essential when you are practicing yoga.

A yoga diet consists of foods that are healthy for your body, not a lot of junk foods. The more natural foods you eat the more you will achieve from your yoga sessions. Natural foods are foods such as:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole Grains
- Pasta
- Potatoes
- Yogurt
- Cereals

This is not all the foods that are considered natural, but just a few to give you an idea. Although a yoga diet is mostly vegetarian based it does not mean that you have to give up eating meat altogether. It simply means that it would be healthier if you did. If you find it to be too much of a dramatic change for you to completely change your diet, then simply monitor what you eat and how much you eat. It is also healthier if you cut out deserts and salty foods like cake and potato chips.

It is a known fact that different foods can cause your body to react in different ways. For example, a diet that is made up of all healthy and natural foods will not only keep you in great physical health, but it can make you more mentally aware of your surroundings. It helps to purify the mind making you feel happy and at peace with yourself and with the people around you. You can handle confrontations and problem that arise much easier and more calmly when eating a proper diet.

Foods that are considered unhealthy affect your mind the opposite way; they make you feel tired and sometimes confused. When confronted with the problems of everyday life you may begin to feel overwhelmed and even experience anger and become withdrawn.

Eating unhealthy foods can cause your body to have a lower immune system. This makes it very difficult for your body to fight off diseases. It also may cause a problem if you became injured by slowing down the healing

process. It is even possible that your body will not be strong enough to heal itself at all.

Changing your diet habits can be difficult to do and there is a lot to consider before doing so. You need to make sure that you are getting the proper vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy. It may also take some time to make these changes. Some people can make a huge change with little effort while many cannot. If you find it difficult to make all the needed changes at once, then take it slow and change your eating habits gradually.

Your diet also affects your sleeping habits. The wrong foods can cause you to toss and turn all night creating a restless sleep. When this happens, your body is just as tired when you wake up, as it was when you laid down. Unhealthy foods can also cause a person to have insomnia, making it almost impossible to fall asleep at night.

Eating a healthy diet and practicing yoga will help you to go to sleep and actually enjoy a great night sleep. You will begin to notice that you have more energy to last through the day and feel better in every way both mentally and physically. A good night rest will allow you wake up refreshed and ready for whatever the day has in store for you. You will find that you can concentrate much better and it is easier to make challenging decisions.

You may have already realized that not sleeping well can make you feel sad and keeps you in a bad mood most of the time. Nothing seems to ever go right and you may not feel like dealing with anyone. Your mood will dramatically change with a good night sleep; you may find yourself looking forward to a new day. Others will be asking you what has changed when they notice the new positive attitude you have from simply receiving enough restful sleep.

Proper sleeping habits help to stimulate the immune system so it can fight off diseases and help you to feel better when you have colds or suffer from allergies. A good night sleep is essential for the overall health of your body.

## Concentration



Sometimes you may find it very difficult to concentrate on anything. All of your thoughts just seem to run together and nothing makes sense. When this happens, many people become overwhelmed and extremely stressed. Many people suffer from headaches and stiffness in joints caused from the anxiety that the lack of concentration can create. Many people even suffer from anxiety attacks, while others seem to just give up and simply stop trying to figure out anything.

This is another reason why yoga is so great. Through the act of meditation, a person can achieve a clear mind allowing them to greatly improve their concentration. This sets you up for a happier, healthier life. In yoga, Dharana is considered the sixth stage of yoga and is the stage where you prepare your mind for meditation.

Most people do not possess the ability to perform Dharana and this is why they feel so confused and agitated much of the time. They are easily distracted and find it very difficult to concentrate on anything. Once you have mastered this stage in yoga, you will notice a big change in your overall view of life.

Having the ability to stay focused on one given thing at a time is having power over your own body and mind. It can make a person feel as though they can accomplish anything at any given time. You will become more aware of your surroundings and know how to accomplish your goals with an ease that you never thought would be possible.

The two main things that distract a person causing them not to be able to concentrate would be fear and being bored. Many people live in so much fear everyday that they cannot function properly. Many go to sleep at night fearing what the next day will bring. Their sleep is restless and disturbed causing them to wake up tired and exhausted before the day even begins.

Others have a fear of doing without necessities such as making enough money to pay the house payment or make the car payment. They just don't seem to have enough to go around and every day is lived in fear of just surviving another day, only to turn around and do the same thing all over again.

There are many things that can create fear in a person's life causing them to lack concentration and happiness. When a person learns to let go of the fear, then they are on their way to reaching the stage of Dharana and achieving concentration.

You can start by not setting your goals to high. Keep them realistic enough so that you can accomplish them. There may be nothing more disappointing and intimidating in this world than having goals that can never be reached.



People become bored with their lives when their goals are set to low. There is no challenge mentally or physically for these people. Life just seems to pass by with nothing interesting ever happening. You lose your sense of excitement and your body and mind begins to shut down from lack of use. Your mind needs to be stimulated and challenged to keep it alert and improve concentration.

By overcoming these two main obstacles in your life and completing the other five stages of yoga, you will be ready to tackle Dharana. Once you have mastered this stage of yoga you and everyone else will notice a big change in the way you look, feel and act. It is the road to complete concentration.

## **Meditation**



Meditation is a very important part of yoga. It is essential to the overall balance that you are trying to achieve by taking part in yoga sessions. It is the way to find peace of mind and an overall sense of well-being. To acquire meditation you must be able to perform deep breathing exercises. Your breathing is what connects your body to your mind allowing you to reach complete meditation.

In yoga, meditation is the way to reach your inner sprit allowing you to receive peace and harmony in your life. It helps you to learn how to control your thoughts and emotions under difficult situations. It relaxes your mind and body helping you to have more positive energy. It is a way to have control over your mind allowing it to be clear of thoughts and desires giving it a chance to rest and heal itself.

It is believed that meditation can aid in the natural healing of ones body. It can help to keep your blood pressure under control along with cholesterol levels. Meditation can aid in relieving body tension making

breathing easier and smoother while helping to reduce stress. Meditation can calm a person's body helping to prevent strokes and heart attacks.

Meditation is the best way to exercise and strengthen your mind. It is a way to receive freedom from all the problems of the everyday world. It is the one true way to receive peace and tranquility in your life. When meditating it is best to not have any music or any sounds that can cause distractions. Complete silence is always the best.



When you are a beginner at meditation here are a few ideas to help you get started, first find a position that is the most comfortable for you. It could be in either a chair or on the floor, whichever is best for you. Keep the upper part of your body straight. This would include your head, neck and chest. Remember to always keep your back straight.

You should feel a slight arch in your back with your hips leaning forward. Sitting on pillows will help you to obtain the correct position regardless of where you are sitting. You should place your hands on your

thighs with your palms facing upward. Close your eyes and visualize a spot to focus your attention while breathing normally.

It is hard not to think about everything when you begin meditating, but the trick is to not allow your mind to begin concentrating on any one particular thing. Let the thoughts drift by without elaborating on any one of them. This will take practice and time but with the right training, you will find the way to let go of the world and enter a peaceful meditation.

Meditation is the way to find the center of existence for you personally. When you feel more at ease and in tune with your own mind and body, you will be more accepting of yourself and others. It will make you a kinder and gentler person that will be able to accept and deal with the things life dishes out to you on a daily basis.

Meditation is a great way to start your mornings. It will prepare you for the events of the day. At night, it will help you shed off the stress of the day and relax you enough to help you sleep peacefully. Meditation helps you to find the center of your individual existence.

## A Healthy Balance



There are many reasons for wanting to do yoga. Receiving a healthy balance for your body is the main one. Yoga also benefits a persons mind and increases their overall body awareness. Yoga is a way to stimulate nerves that run along the spine, by doing this you are helping your body's energy to flow freely throughout your entire body.

When your blood circulates properly your whole body feels energized, this even includes your brain. Energizing your brain encourages positive thinking and helps a person to handle situations in a positive way instead of stressing over them. You feel clearheaded and ready for almost anything. Continued yoga sessions can help to sharpen a person's concentration and free their sprit.

You can create a healthy balance physically when performing yoga. Some of the benefits you receive physically are improving flexibility and

muscle joint mobility. It can also strengthen and tone your muscles while helping to build and make them stronger. This means it can also help to correct a person's posture and strengthen their spine while easing back pain.

Yoga can greatly improve your digestive system which helps your body to have a healthy balance. Being overweight is something many people in the world suffer from. A yoga exercise session can balance a person's life by helping them to get in shape while improving their overall balance and coordination.



Yoga can help relieve muscle strain from an injury or from the overuse of a muscle. The regular routine of a work day creates stimulation in some parts of the body while other parts are left unused. Yoga helps to stimulate all of your body's muscles creating a healthy balance for your body.

Yoga helps your metabolism to be balanced allowing it to work at its best. It creates a balance in areas such as your respiratory and cardiovascular systems, which promotes vitality in your life helping you to look and feel younger.

Yoga is the best way to create a healthy balance for your body. Be sure and exercise both sides of the body equally. Many people may find that one side of their body may be stronger than the other side, but it is still important to keep them equally balanced in every session. For example, if you do forward bends it is recommended that you also do back bends. Unless there is a medical condition that prohibits this.

Yoga also helps you to have a healthy balance spiritually. It does this by strengthen your awareness concerning your feelings and worldly things. It helps you to get in touch with your inner feelings, instead of just what you feel on the outside. It teaches you patience, which is something that is needed in everyday life. It also teaches you how to forgive yourself for not being perfect which helps you to forgive others.

## Moving Up



When beginning anything in life you have to start at the bottom and work yourself up. Yoga is no different; you must start with the basic steps and move up to new levels to gain the most benefits. You start with a desire to make a difference in your life then you make a commitment to follow it through.

When considering the stages of yoga you begin with what is called Yama. Here you need to learn yourself completely by mastering the skill of accepting yourself for whom and what you are. Only then will you be ready to make changes in the areas where you are unhappy.

A person cannot change something they are not willing to admit is a problem. This is what makes mastering this stage of yoga so important. It is the only way a person can learn how to make the changes in their life that will lead to happiness.

The next stage a person needs to conquer to begin moving up would be Niyama. Many people find it hard to have self-discipline. For example, you knew you should not have had that second piece of cake after dinner, but it was just so tempting.

Perhaps you have found yourself in a situation where you knew that you could not afford that new car; the payments were just too high. But it was such a terrific car that you just couldn't resist. Now you find yourself struggling to make the payments.

When desires control your life, you have no room for mental or spiritual development. Once you master the stage of Niyama you will be able to control these desires and have control over your life instead of letting life control you. In this stage you will receive purity in your life while developing spiritually and mentally.

Now you are ready to move up to the stage of Asana. One of your goals in yoga is to achieve meditation. To do this you have to prepare your body and mind to be ready to accept meditation. Asana is yoga poses that allow you to prepare your body and mind for this action. The poses teach you how to focus on what you are doing and how not to let your mind stray. This is needed before you can learn how to meditate.

After mastering this stage you then move up one more step to the stage of Pranayama. You do this by learning how to get control of your breathing through yoga techniques. This is an important stage as your breathing is the life force of your whole being. You are now ready to disconnect your mind and body from the outside world by moving up to the stage of Pratyahara.



After mastering the stage of Pratyahara you now have control over your breathing so you can begin to prepare your mind for meditation by moving up another stage to Dharana. After completing this stage of preparing your body mentally and physically you are ready to move up to the most wonderful experience of your life. You are ready for complete body and mind meditation, you just moved up to Dhyana.

If you have gotten this far and feel you can accomplish more then there is one stage left. If you reach the stage of Samadhi then you have accomplished what every human being wants out of life, but very few ever receive. If you are dedicated enough to move up the stages in yoga then you will see such a change in your life that you will never want to look back again. Each stage will give you the needed desire and confidence needed to reach the next one.

The stages of yoga is not the only way that a person moves up, the same applies to yoga poses and movements. When you first begin yoga you may find it difficult to perform many of these exercises. Don't let this discourage you as most everyone has had the same problems.

Your first step would be to learn how to do the poses correctly. Master one before moving on to the next. It is imperative that you do the poses correctly so you do not want to rush through this part of the training. Although you may feel impatient to learn more and advance through the stages of yoga it is not something that can be done fast. Yoga is a lifelong commitment that continues to help you grow throughout your entire life.

Be patient and enjoy the benefits that each pose has to offer you. By learning to perform them correctly you will begin to see your body transform into a physically fit one. You will enjoy the benefits of having more energy and stamina throughout the day. Sleeping well at night and having the feeling of being completely refreshed in the mornings is something that can't be beat.

As you advance and move up to more difficult poses, not only will your body be transformed but your mind will be also. You will notice a renewed feeling and will be more confident and happier than you ever dreamed you could be. Moving up in yoga is a great feeling that encourages you to move up in life.

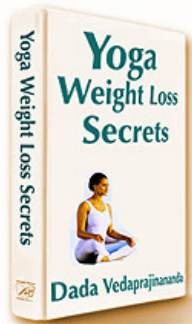
## For More Information



There are many different places out there where you can find out more about yoga, the different types, styles and more. You likely already know that there are many books and videos, DVDs and much more. You can also look into classes or instructors in your area.

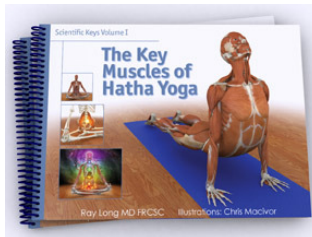
Log on to your membership site at <http://www.Yoga-Discipline.com> and participate in the online Yoga community now!

## Recommended Resources



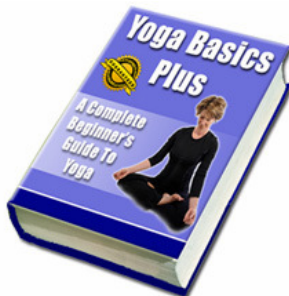
Yoga Weight Loss Secrets

Price: ~~\$81.35~~ **\$19.95** (special for members!)



Combine Modern Western Science with the Ancient Art of Hatha Yoga – Full Color Pictures!

Price: **\$48.00**



Yoga Basics Plus – A Complete Beginner's Guide

Price: **\$27.77**



Start Meditation – Stop Smoking

Price: **\$19.95**

## Conclusions



By now you should feel like you know quite a bit about yoga. There is really no way you could learn everything there is to know about every type of yoga from one book like this, but you should be well on your way and you should have a much better understanding about it.

With the last chapter, you should also know where to find more information so if there is anything you can not find in the book or you want to learn more about a particular type of yoga, you should be able to find it from those references.

Yoga can help you to have a sense of overall happiness. The average person is always looking for a way to get their body in better physical shape by losing weight and strengthening muscles. They look for ways to clear their minds and find some type of peace that will help them to relax.

Many people find it hard to concentrate on what they are doing making it difficult to complete even simple everyday tasks. Yoga is a way that all of this

can be accomplished, helping to make you a stronger happier person.

Happiness comes with having control over your own emotions.

Learn how to help your body work together in harmony, feel energized and be happier than you ever thought possible. Yoga helps you to understand just how important your body really is and how much you benefit from keeping it healthy. There is no better way to cleanse the body, mind and soul than with yoga sessions. Yoga is so divestible it can be suited to fit anyone's needs, from the youngest student to the oldest.

Don't let medical problems stand in your way of acquiring better health and harmony in your life. Instead, improve it through the art of yoga. If you feel that you do not have the time for yoga then start off with short sessions. As you see the improvements in your overall health, you may find that you have more time than you realized at first. Are you ready to begin your new life today?

