

All Benefits of Yoga Physical, Mental and Spiritual

Yoga has all the benefits. Here are the top ten benefits:

1. Increasing flexibility
2. Increasing physical strength
3. Increasing mental focus and concentration.
4. Increasing balance
5. Cultivating self respect and respect for others
6. Cultivating confidence
5. Cultivating a sharp mind and intellect
6. Cultivating emotional control and sense of calm amidst a chaotic environment
7. Cultivates healthy living
8. Cultivates focusing on the present
9. Positive thinking, productive thinking removing self doubt fear anger and resentment
10. Overall general wellness physical mental and spiritual

My personal thoughts on Yoga as Relaxation Spiritual Renewal and Health

Yoga is a 5,000 year old system of health that addresses all aspects of an individual. It is a system designed to provide homeostasis or balance to all three facets of a human being, restoring body mind and spirit. It is this latter third component that needs to be nurtured. In a fast paced modern culture, it is hard enough to relax let alone take off any extended time in order to cultivate and connect with our spiritual side. This spiritual side is inherently part of us as the "inner self" which is peaceful. This peaceful inner self is our better nature sitting latent within us awaiting awakening, leading us closer to divinity. If we do not nurture this third facet, the spiritual component, we risk becoming callous aggressive and harmful to self and others. Our better nature is buried underneath, suffocates and stagnates, just like the body and the mind. Yoga literally means "yoke" in sanskrit (the ancient language originating in India) or "union" connecting the body and mind with our "inner selves" or spirit. Yoga encourages wellness beyond the physical realm realizing that a body in perfect health, and a body in balance with strength and agility will ease distractions to it, and so it happens to unfold the path to cultivating the mind towards self study, reflection and meditation linking to our "inner self" opening the channel to a spiritual awakening and appreciation for the divinity within us and around us.

Yoga is an awakening philosophy that leads the body toward physical discipline, guided dietary lifestyle, ethical clean living, mental discipline and finally spirituality which supports any religion. Yoga has no quarrel with religion it supports it and leads us to appreciate and nurture our complex biological machines as well as recognizing divinity within all of nature. For a scientist or agnostic regardless of belief system or absence of traditional dogma, yoga fosters an appreciation for the "energetic force" or "prana" existing in all beings and raw energy existing in the universe. Yoga does not force one to do anything. It encourages one to go to the physical and mental edge but never to cross the threshold towards discomfort or pain. Yoga is not dogmatic, like its physical "asanas" or postures, its spiritual philosophy

is flexible as well. Yoga teachers must instruct a person only what he or she can accept at that particular time, not what finally in the end is best for that individual. For example bad habits or "mental grooves" known as "samskaras" in sanskrit slowly begin to fade away with daily yoga practice. The deeper third layer is exposed and the spiritual awakening unfolds. Yoga however will not produce this unfolding with force, nor will it occur spontaneously without effort. Yoga is flexible in its application, it offers us the fluidity of choice, applying all or only some components of the yoga lifestyle. No judgements, you get to choose what you want to achieve out of yoga. Yoga offers us the gift of "free will" you get to choose when you are open to enlightenment, and become receptive to embracing the tools for self healing of the body mind and spirit. Once the seed of knowledge is introduced, the "samskaras" or mental grooves are altered so that eventually out of your own "free will" you, choose the path enlightenment leading to complete health. Once "enlightenment" takes place, our better nature surfaces and realization takes place that the path to take is "ahimsa" or "non harm" of self or others leading us to self improvement becoming a non dependent, gentle, kind and illuminated spirit. An example of this would be the addicting habit of smoking cigarettes. One can still practice yoga and smoke, however as one evolves in the practice of yoga, new mental grooves or neural pathways develop a new habit, that which leads one to discard anything unhealthy, or self destructive, leading to the surfacing of the "inner true self", permeating every facet of an individual's life. This new "samskara" once repeated, cultivates "ahimsa" or non harm overpowering the craving for smoking leading to cessation of self destruction and harm to loved ones around tobacco smoke. Yoga must be practiced daily and for a very long time, without any expectations, before enlightenment occurs. As mentioned before the appeal for yoga is that there is no competition with self or others, no judgements or requirements of dogma of any sort. It has to be gentle and flexible in its application. It is not a so called "tough pill" to swallow as medicine for self healing. It does not apply tough love. It is not like boot camp! An unreceptive individual is not lectured or pushed into it. They must seek and they will find it within them to change when the time comes. The flexibility of yoga physically and metaphorically can be compared to the analogy with a tree. The forces of the wind ruffle the leaves of the tree, yet its branches remain flexible to this change, it bends to this force while simultaneously remaining grounded in its roots, strong and powerful against the forces of the wind. Likewise, we must be flexible with the constant changes and chaotic flux in our lives, yet remaining unaltered or affected by these changes, staying grounded and rooted in our actions and reactions. We maintain integrity and strength in body mind and spirit in the face of any adversity or stress. It is not about maintaining success with your endeavors that leads to a strong individual. It is the individual, who through adversity and repeated failure is resilient and rises from the "ashes" like the phoenix willing to come back stronger in will, determination, and character, yet remaining flexible to all forces negative and positive. Yoga teaches this philosophy beautifully in its physically challenging poses as well as in taking it off the mat and applying it in life. Life is full of setbacks. Success is determined by how you handle these setbacks. Stress is related to most illness physical and mental. So why not change the way you react to stress through the daily application of yoga philosophy?

Whoever is pliable and yielding is resilient. There is nothing to defend except your own integrity in any situation.

"Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape" Michael McGiffy M.D.

Emotional reaction to stress is directly linked with shallow breath. Yoga recognizes this physical reaction and teaches breathing technique to manage stress. If the physical reaction to stress is not addressed, the breath and stress hormones released chronically leads to a nervous system out of balance, and in turn activating the cardiovascular system raising the blood pressure and cardiac output putting the heart and nervous system in chronic overdrive. This biological machine eventually breaks down. So the common statement one hears when an individual is all "stressed out" is to stop and take a deep breathe. It literally does help! Practice "pranayama" or breathing exercises long enough and one eventually gains control over the respiratory, cardiac, and nervous system.

Self interest, and desire itself can lead to disease. If one becomes addicted to self desires such as food, sex, power, and money, maintaining and containing this inner monster leads to stress and self destruction. Yoga encourages detachment from worldly things. Living in the material world, yet seeking the spiritual world beyond our realm. Yoga helps one get rid of addiction, and disease management for physical, mental and spiritual imbalance.

Yoga is an essential component to the future of medicine. It is an adjunct to modern medicine, and will be part of the future of medicine. Yoga will be treated as complimentary medicine not "alternative medicine". We see the beginning of "synthesis" whereby yoga therapy is becoming another branch of complimentary medicine. Yoga therapists consult with physical therapists, mental health therapists, physicians who are allopathic, osteopathic and naturopathic in training. We strive for this union as the evolution of medicine continues. More often than not, we see medical practitioners recommending "lifestyle changes" known to yoga for at least 5,000 years. These medical experts have discovered this age old gem called Yoga, and have themselves become transformed. Physicians like Dr. Timothy McCall, Dr. Dean Ornish, Dr. Nirmala Heriza and others advancing the cause for "Integrative Medicine". Integrative medicine has a goal to alter the current path of destruction and encourage preventative medicine as one of the components lacking in medicine today. It is the future path of medicine.

Presently, we currently have an epidemic rising in this country, it is obesity and its related diseases such as adult onset diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Here is the actual statistic which is most disturbing to me: 1 in 587 children in the U.S. are diabetic and obese, leading to the coining of a new term "diaobesity"! The United States is not alone in this rising epidemic. As of 2008 6% of India and 3% of China are Type 2 diabetic which is adult in onset, and secondary to obesity. It is a huge number considering the population of India and China. It is a shame that India the birthplace of Yoga has now succumbed to the ravages of modern society. Even in Europe, obesity resulting from a sedentary, and stressed out society addicted to processed foods, fast foods and supersized portions is now becoming more common place catching up with the United States. I recently attended a medical seminar that urged us as physicians to be responsible

and tell the patients to live better, by directly encouraging change in a patient's lifestyle. It is a "global warning" to physicians of all specialties that " 1 in every 7 dollars is spent on, and directly caused by diabetes, a plague resulting from obesity. As a podiatric physician and a practicing yogini it is so very disturbing to know first hand, that according to the International Diabetic Federation- somewhere in the world, a diabetic leg is amputated every 30 seconds resulting from the medical complications arising out of having diabetes. It really is the "Katrina" of health care. I am not judging anyone regarding lifestyle. If nothing else comes out of my commentary, I wish to at least impart a mental awakening that may spur you onwards toward change.

I am partial to Yoga, but at least small steps one day at a time can change societies currently destructive path. I personally wish to impart the practice of Yoga an ancient wisdom, exuding joy, love, and health, causing people to spark the light within them towards enlightenment ! Yoga teachers greet each other and conclude a yoga practice with the sanskrit word "Namaste" which means " I recognize and honor the divine light within you". There are many paths to the truth. I chose to practice yoga and truly wish to spark the "divine light within you" coming out of the darkness and into the light.

Yoga is medicine for the body mind and spirit. Health care costs continue to rise and the dependency for medicine increases. Why not break the cycle and be proactive before disease sets in?

My motto is "Evolve or Stagnate"

Seek Enlightenment ! Achieve "Serenity Now" through Yoga!

My own personal thoughts on Yoga and Health..... I am the instrument for yoga and will always strive for self improvement. I invite this dedication to you.

Dacia Milescu D.P.M.

The father of Integral Hatha Yoga Sri Swami Satchidananda set the standards to the goal of yoga:

"A body of perfect health and strength, mind with all clarity and calmness, intellect as sharp as a razor, will as pliable as steel, heart full of love and compassion, life full of dedication and realization of the True Self is the goal of Integral Yoga. Attain this through asanas, pranayama, chanting of Holy Names, self discipline, selfless action, meditation, study and reflection."

Recommended Reading:

The Heart and Science of Yoga: A Blueprint for Peace, Happiness and Freedom from Fear- by Leonard Perlmutter

Yoga As Medicine- by Dr. Timothy McCall

Dr. Yoga- A Complete Program for discovering the Head to Toe Health Benefits of Yoga- by Dr. Nirmala Heriza

Happy Yoga- by Steve Ross

Yoga The Path to Holistic Health- by B.K.S. Iyengar