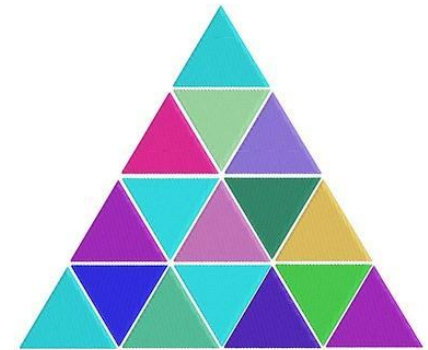


Holistic Health and Happiness



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Holistic Health and Happiness through the eyes of Yoga

What does Yoga have to do with Holistic Health or even Happiness?

- Yoga integrates physical, mental and spiritual components
- It's not just about exercise; it's a practice that fosters self-awareness, reduces stress and promotes a connection between
- body, mind and spirit.
- By addressing these three aspects of a person's being-mind, body and spirit – yoga offers a holistic path to health and wellness



The Yoga Trinity

Yoga is an umbrella term encompassing eight elements. We will be focusing on the following three:

1. Yoga movements or postures, known as asana - Physical
2. Meditation practice - Mind
3. Pranayama practice - otherwise known as breathing exercises - Spirit The Latin word, inspirare, combines in and out. Can also have a broader meaning of a divine, creative influence of a person



1. Asana

- Muscle tension and soreness can be common signs of stress and anxiety
- People experiencing stress and anxiety tend to exhibit muscular tightness and pain throughout the body
- Asana works to stretch out the muscles, tendons, ligaments and connective tissue, while increasing blood flow and oxygenation
- Promotes a release of endorphins – a “feel good” chemical that promotes a sense of well-being



1. Asana *(cont'd)*

Look for local yoga classes that offer the following:

- Gentle flow
- Beginners' series
- Smaller classes

Avoid:

- Hot yoga
- Power yoga



1. Asana *(cont'd)*

- A short, daily yoga practice can be transformational, as it can change our patterns, i.e., *our posture, how we walk, how we stand*
- The good feeling that comes with a short practice can be the motivation to create long term sustainable changes



Asana (*cont'd*)

A short practice

- While seated:
- Sun breaths
- Side to Side extensions
- Cat/Cow
- Standing:
- HA
- Half Sun Salutation



2. Pranayama, aka Breathing Practice

- Pranayama is a thousands year old breathing technique that originated in India
- It involves controlling your breath in different styles and lengths
- It's the feeling of being in touch with your breath and the life-force moving through your body, feeling truly alive



2. Pranayama *(cont'd)*

- Mitigates the effect of the Fight/Flight response associated with the Sympathetic NS
- Helps to activate the Parasympathetic NS -- which is associated with the Rest/Digest response
- This response contributes to a reduction of negative emotions, such as stress, depression and anxiety by decreasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, promoting a sense of calm



2. Pranayama *(cont'd)*

- The Three Part Breath is a simple, effective pranayama practice that helps to increase the diaphragm's strength and range of motion, decreases anxiety/stress, corrects poor breathing habits, and increases inner focus
- It involves slow, steady, and deep breathing while filling up the abdomen, rib cage and lungs
- As per Dr. Andrew Weil, *"I had to limit my advice on healthier living to just one tip, it would be simply to learn how to breathe correctly."*



2. Pranayama *(cont'd)*

What is the Three-Part Breath?

- Also known as Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Sit well with your spine straight
- First fill your belly with air, then expand your rib cage, and finally draw the breath into your chest
- Imagine the air flowing into these three areas like filling a glass in three stages.
- Exhale slowly and fully, reversing the process. Empty the chest first, then the ribs and finally the belly, gently squeezing out any remaining air
- Continue with this three-part breath pattern for several rounds, focusing on the sensations of the breath moving through your body
- Maintain a gentle and controlled breath, no forcing or straining



3. Meditation

Meditation is the third technique designed to better familiarize ourselves with various aspects of our inner landscape

- With asana, (physical practice), we are getting familiar with how our body works
- Pranayama allows us to become familiar with our breath
- Meditation helps us to understand the way our mind works -- and awareness regarding the quality of our thoughts



3. Meditation *(cont'd)*

Just a few of the benefits:

- Teaches one to be in the “present moment”
- Stability
- Clarity
- Strength
- Patience
- Tolerance
- Improving intuition
- Reduction in blood pressure



3. Meditation *(cont'd)*

The measure of its benefits shows up in your life

- You will have a gap between stimuli and response. Do we react or can we learn to pause?
- Atticus Finch response
- In that gap, there is tremendous opportunity to grow
- Having a more open and spacious life because of the inner strength this practice affords you



3. Meditation (*cont'd*)

OK, let's practice...

- Sit well, hands on lap in the position of calm abiding
- Let go of everything from the day and even a minute ago
- Pay attention to the rhythmic quality of your breath without trying to change anything.
- Inhale with warmth, elation and joy, as if you are receiving the life force (prana), as a gift from God
- Exhale with a sense of gratitude silently expressing your humbleness as a surrender
- Bring your attention to the feeling of the breath at the edge of your nostrils
- On your next inhale, can you feel the coolness of the air?
- As you exhale, can you feel the warmth?
- Mantra will be: In Cool/Out Warm
- No criticism or judgement – just keep coming back



Yoga and its effect on sleep

- Yoga can increase melatonin levels by promoting mindfulness and deep breathing, which reduces stress and its cortisol levels
- Creating rituals is very important for sleep and exercise hygiene
- Incorporate a daily yoga, breath and meditation practice
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time will help decrease stress, build self esteem, and increase a sense of virtuousness/self-care



Conclusion

Modern life conspires against us in many ways:

- Staring at computers and phones
- Addictions to above
- Anxiety
- Processed foods
- Inactivity- sitting at desks or on a couch
- Financial insecurity
- Stress
- Physical illness



Conclusion *(cont'd)*

- Yoga can be system of self-healing for the body, mind and spirit, with the goal of creating balance and health
- We can do this by making small changes - but on a consistent basis
- Start small and choose a handful of these suggestions, even just one!
- Believe in your own ability to change your health habits, or any other aspects of your lifestyle you want to tackle, you are so worthy. It is your birthright





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