**Yoga, A Way of Life**

**Background: International Day of Yoga** is celebrated on 21st June in order to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga. The day is organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations. Today it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity.

Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word ‘Yoga’ derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness.

**Benefits of Yoga That Are Supported by Science**

* Yoga improves flexibility. Flexibility is an important component of physical health. Yoga offers many styles to choose from, varying in intensity from high to moderate to mild. Even the lowest intensity styles have been found to increase flexibility
* Yoga helps with stress relief. The physical practice is just one aspect of yoga. Meditation, breath work and auditory rituals, like chanting and [sound baths](https://www.healthline.com/health/sound-bath), have all also been shown to significantly lessen tension and relieve stress.
* Yoga improves mental health. Both movement-based yoga therapies and breathing-based practices have been shown to significantly improve depressive symptoms
* Yoga may reduce inflammation. Yoga — of various styles, intensities and durations — reduced the biochemical markers of inflammation across several chronic conditions
* Yoga is likely to increase strength
* Yoga may improve quality of life
* Yoga may boost immunity
* Yoga can improve balance. Balance is not just important when you’re trying to stand on one leg in Tree Pose in yoga class. It’s also essential for simple everyday movements such as picking something up off the floor, reaching up to a shelf and descending stairs.
* Yoga may improve cardiovascular functioning
* Yoga may help improve sleep. Yoga has been shown to improve both how quickly people fall asleep and how deeply they stay asleep.
* Yoga may improve bone health
* Yoga can promote better posture and body awareness

**Takeaway:** Numerous practices fall into category of yoga and most do not involve physical activity, instead focusing on meditation techniques. Even karmic or philanthropic action can qualify as yoga!

Because yoga is not limited to physical movement, it’s a practice you can do every day.

Find the modality that works best for you and remember: Investing in a yoga practice is investing in you!

**Sources:**

**National Health Portal India**

**Healthline**

**Returning to school after Covid-19**

**Overview:** The coronavirus outbreak has caused major disruptions to daily life and children are feeling these changes deeply. While the return to school will be not only welcome but exciting for many students, others will be feeling anxious or frightened. Here are tips to help children navigate some of the complicated emotions they may be facing while going back to school.

* Children may feel nervous or reluctant to return to school, especially if they have been learning at home for months. Remind children about the positives – that they will be able to see their friends, teachers and continue learning new things.
* Children may also get upset or frustrated if they are finding it hard to wear masks, especially when running or playing. We have to emphasize that it's important that we all still follow measures to be safe.
* Encourage regular handwashing to your child. Make sure to teach them about how even though germs are invisible, they could still be there. When children understand why they need to wash their hands, they’re likely to continue doing so.
* We can also show them [how to cover a cough or a sneeze](https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection) with our elbow and ask them to tell us if they have a fever, cough or are having difficulty in breathing.
* It’s important to be calm and proactive in our conversations with children – check in with them to see how they are doing. Their emotions will change regularly and we need to show them that’s okay.
* Whether at school or at home, caregivers can engage children in creative activities, such as playing and drawing, to help them express and communicate any negative feelings they may be experiencing in a safe and supportive environment. This helps children find positive ways to express difficult feelings such as anger, fear or sadness.
* If child is worried about bullying either in person or online, it’s important to let them know that they are not alone and they can always talk to you or another trusted adult. The more you [talk to your children about bullying](https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-talk-your-children-about-bullying), the more comfortable they will be telling you if they see or experience it.
* Get vaccinated - Getting a Covid-19 vaccine can help keep them more safe

**Takeaway:** Being prepared for a variety of schooling environments can empower you and your child and reduce anxiety.

**Sources:**

**UNICEF for every child**

**Mayoclinic**

**Be a Life Saver and Donate Blood**

**Overview:** Every year countries around the world celebrate World Blood Donor Day on 14th June.Most of us want to make a positive difference to the lives of others – people we don’t know; people we may never meet. Thankfully, there’s a simple, safe and effective way to make the biggest difference of all: give blood.

Doing so is a uniquely powerful act. The blood you give could save the life of a woman suffering birth complications, revive and sustain a child with severe anaemia, facilitate urgent surgery, or provide critical support during a public health crisis.

**Pre-requisite for donating blood**

* Drink an extra 16 ounces of water before your appointment.
* Eat a healthy meal that’s low in fat.
* Wear a short-sleeved shirt or a shirt with sleeves that are easy to roll up.

A trained staff member performs examination to check

* Pulse
* Blood pressure
* Body temperature
* Haemoglobin levels

Blood is also tested for several diseases like,

* [Hepatitis B](https://www.healthline.com/health/hepatitis-b) and C
* [HIV](https://www.healthline.com/health/hiv-aids)
* [West Nile virus](https://www.healthline.com/health/west-nile-virus)
* [Syphilis](https://www.healthline.com/health/std/syphilis)

**Health benefits of donating blood**

* **Prevents hemochromatosis.** Donating blood would reduce the risk of developing hemochromatosis.
* **Blood cell production.** After a person donates blood, the body will replenish the blood loss by stimulating the production of new blood cells. The new blood cells would help in maintaining a person’s good health.
* **Lowering cancer risk.** Donating blood helps lower the risk of cancer as the iron stores in the blood are maintained at healthy levels. When there is a reduced iron level in the body, it is linked to lower cancer risk. At the same time, when the iron is too low in the body, it leads to iron deficiency and other related health conditions.
* **Heart and liver health. I**t reduces the risk of heart and liver ailments which are caused due to iron overload in the body. Excess iron present in the body will increase the risk of developing health conditions like liver failure, pancreatic damage, or heart abnormalities. Therefore, by donating blood, the body can maintain the required levels of iron and reduce the risk of various health conditions.

**Takeaway**

Donating blood is an excellent way to serve the community as both the donor and the receiver will reap health benefits.  If you’re thinking of donating blood, you should weigh the disadvantages with the advantages and make a decision that makes sense for you.

**Sources:**

**WHO**

**Healthline**

**The Unexpected Effects of High Screen time**

**Background:** Screens are a part of everyone’s life these days. While there is growing evidence showing the negative effects of screen time on adults and children, we can improve our health by cutting back on the amount of time spent in front of the screen.

**The effects of high screen time on our health**

* Obesity. Too much time engaging in a sedentary activity, such as playing video games or watching TV, can be a risk factor for obesity. Heart health is also impacted and can lead to a higher risk of diabetes, increased blood pressure or cholesterol.
* Sleep problems. The light emitted from electronic devices interferes with the brain’s sleep cycle and can prevent getting a good night’s sleep.
* Chronic neck and back pain. Too much screen time can lead to poor posture, causing chronic neck, shoulder and back pain. Instead, take breaks to walk around, stand or stretch. Make sure chair provides ample back support and try to keep the device at eye level.
* Depression and anxiety. All the time spent in front of screens can negatively affect our mental and emotional wellbeing.

**Tips to reduce screen time**

* Parents are role models for their kids. The next time you binge-watch your favourite Netflix series, remember that we are setting an example for our children.
* Set aside time to unplug. Choose a time for your whole family to unplug from the phone, TV and computer.
* Use parental controls. There are tools one can use to filter or block unwanted content. We can even set daily screen time limits that can lock our children out of apps after they have reached a set amount of time.
* Encourage other activities. Get involved in activities that don’t require a screen like playing outside, reading a book or playing a board game.
* Keep bedrooms screen-free. One may want to consider making it a rule that electronic devices are not allowed in the bedroom. This also includes tablets and other handheld devices that your kids may be tempted to use at night, which could interfere with their sleep.
* The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends avoiding screens for children younger than 18 to 24 months. Children over age 2 should be limited to 1 to 2 hours of screen time per day. Adults should also try to limit their screen time outside of work hours.

**Sources:**

**Valleywise Health**

**Global Day of Parents – Importance of Spending Time With Your Ageing Parents**

**Background:** Global Day of Parents is annually marked on 1st June. In 2012, the UN General Assembly declared the first-ever Global Day of Parents. The day is celebrated to honour parents for their sacrifices, commitment and selfless love. Being a parent is one of the most universal experiences, but it’s definitely not a walk in the park. So let’s use this day to say thanks to our first teachers and nurturers.

**Importance and ways of spending time with your ageing parents**

As we grow older, we realize that our parents need our attention now more than ever before. We realize just how important it is to have a relationship with our parents.

What our aging parents [need most from us is our time](http://www.caring-for-aging-parents.com/gifts-for-elderly-spending-quality-time-together.html). It does not matter how many expensive gifts we have delivered or how many cards we send them; what they need most is our presence. Here are a few reasons why spending quality time with your folks is an incredible experience and fun ideas to get you started.

The first step is learning how to create time to spend with them, no matter how busy our schedule is. If parents have medical challenges, becoming their caregiver can ensure they are comfortable. Below are a few fun things one can do while spending time with their aging parents:

* Start digging for long lost oldies that your parents loved listening to when you were young. Music speaks to the soul and helps us to reminisce certain periods of our life and what we were going through at that time, bringing feelings of nostalgia.
* Try outdoor trips
* Going through old photo albums with your parents, as you listen to the stories and memories behind each photo.
* Showing them new technology- our parents will always be awed by how far technology has come.
* Keep active- For instance, tennis or table tennis with your dad, or yoga with your mom. Exercising together can be a great way for both of you to [keep in shape.](https://theupsidetoaging.com/2017/11/02/staying-active-why-helping-the-older-adults-in-your-life-exercise-is-the-best-care-you-can-provide/)
* Encourage your aging parents to visit community social gatherings. This can help reduce the worry of your parent’s well-being. Getting to know new people can turn a shy old person into a lively senior.

***Remember, It’s Never Too Late to form a relationship with them.***

**Sources:**

**National Today**

**Aging In Place**

**The Upside to Aging**