

Increasing Spirituality Through Yoga As We Age

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Objectives

After attending this presentation, the participant will be able to:

- Discuss 3 of the 8 limbs or paths of yoga
- Describe and practice healthy breathing
- Demonstrate 4 simple yoga movements/poses
- Participate in a short meditation practice



Why Start Yoga?



McCall, T. (2016). 101 Health conditions benefited by yoga. Retrieved from <http://www.drmmcally.com/uploads/2/2/6/5/22658464/101healthconditionshelpedbyyoga.pdf>

Why Start Yoga?

- Flexibility and stress relief and reduction are the two top reasons people began and continue yoga
- 75% of all Americans agree “yoga is good for you.”
- 50% of respondents cited improving overall health as reason to start and continue practicing.
 - 2016 Yoga in America Study. Retrieved from <https://www.yogaalliance.org/Portals/0/2016%20Yoga%20in%20America%20Study%20RESULTS.pdf>

Benefits of Yoga

- Approximately 4 out of 5 use yoga for general wellness or disease prevention, and more than two-thirds said because they perceive it focuses on the whole person — mind, body, and spirit, or to improve energy
 - Stussman, B.J., Black, L.I., Barnes, P.M., Clarke, T. C., Nahin, R.L. (2015). Wellness-related use of common complementary health approaches among adults: United States, 2012. National Health Statistics Report. Nov. 4(85): 1-12.
- Most begin for exercise and stress relief, but spirituality becomes primary reason for maintaining practice
 - Park, C.L., Riley, K.E., Bedesin, E. & Stewart, V.M. (2016). Why practice yoga? Practitioners' motivation for adopting and maintaining yoga practice. Journal of Health Psychology, 21(6): 887-96. doi: 10.1177/1359105314541314.

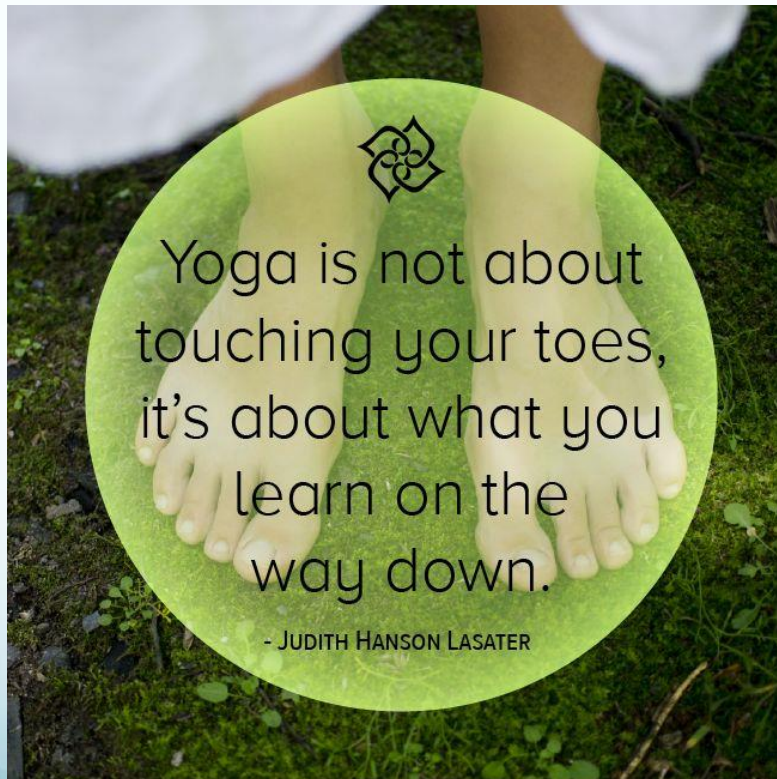
Spiritual aspect of yoga leads to transcendence of self and sense of connectedness to all mankind

- Ross, A., Bevans, M., Friedmann, E., Williams, M.A., and Thomas, S. (2014). I am a nice person when I do yoga!!!. Journal of Holistic Nursing. 32(2): 67 – 77. doi: 10.1177/0898010113508466

International Consensus Definition of Spirituality

- “Spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose, and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature, and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions, and practices.”
 - Puchalski, C.M., Vitillo, R., Hull, S.K., Reller, N. (2014). Improving the spiritual dimension of whole person care: Reaching national and international consensus. Journal of Palliative Medicine, 17(6): 642-656 doi: [10.1089/jpm.2014.9427](https://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2014.9427)

What is Yoga?



- Mind-body practice
- Yoga means “to yoke” - uniting mind, body, and spirit
- Main purpose of yoga - Still the mind
- Poses were first begun to make the body strong enough to sit for hours in meditation

Change

Change is inevitable, continuous, and unavoidable

Everything changes

We may not always be in control of situations around us, but we are in control of our reaction towards them

Yoga practice often parallels life

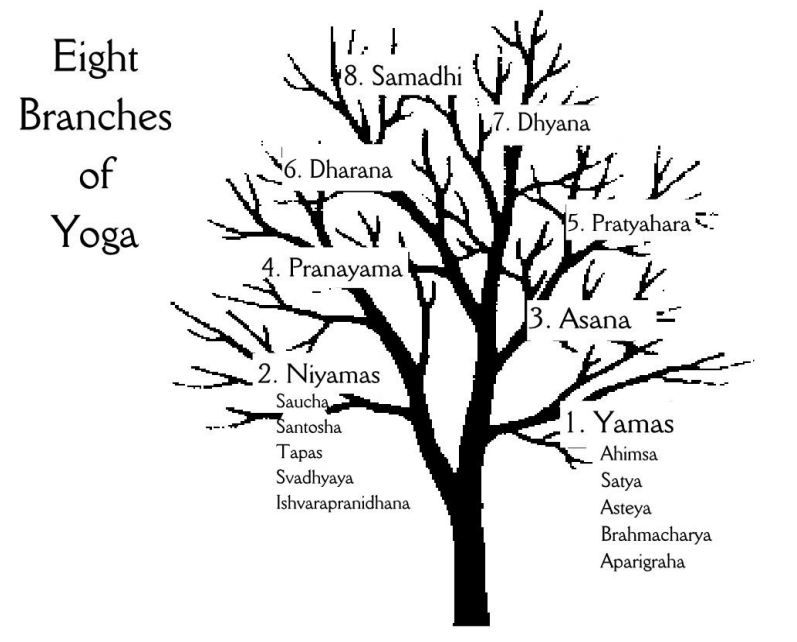
Transformation happens through conscious presence in the moment



8 Limbs of Yoga

We will focus on 3:

- Pranayama or Breathing
- Asanas or Poses
- Dhyana or Meditation



Yoga is holistic practice that unites our body, mind, breathe, and connects us to spiritual aspect of our lives

Breathing

- Synonymous with living. Life force - prana
- Supplies needed oxygen to cells - gets rid of waste products
- Happens automatically for every moment of life. Without it, everything stops
- Breathing can be a bad habit that requires change. Take a few minutes and assess your current breathing style:
 - Is your breathing shallow?
 - Do you breathe erratically (not harmonious)?
 - Do you easily get out of breath?
 - Is your breathing labored at times?
 - Do you breathe too fast?

Breathing

- Yogic breathing is usually done through the nose – both during inhalation and exhalation. This:
 - slows down the breath (2 small openings instead of 1 big one)
 - Air is filtered and warmed in nasal passages
 - Stimulates an energy center near your sinuses
- Let's practice some breathing . . .



Poses



- Poses were originally done to allow the yogis to sit for long periods of time while they meditated
- Intended to make the body strong enough to support the spiritual aspirations
- Designed to put pressure on the glandular systems of the body - increasing its efficiency and total health
- Let's practice some poses. . .

Meditation



- Mental process involving focused attention, or calm awareness – also called Mindfulness
- Many forms or styles
- 2 basic approaches:
 - Meditation with a specific focus
 - Objectless meditation

Meditation

- Causes changes in the brain. After 8 weeks practice:
 - “Increased gray matter concentration in brain regions involved in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective taking”
 - Holzel, B., et al. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 191(1): 36 – 43.
- Important benefit of meditation is cultivation of higher levels of psycho-spiritual well-being.
 - Khalsa, D.S. (2015). Stress, meditation, and Alzheimer’s disease prevention: Where the evidence stands. *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* (48): 1-12. DOI 10.3233/JAD-142766

Technique of the Relaxation Response

- Pick a focus word, short phrase, prayer
- Comfortable position
- Close eyes
- Relax muscles
- Breathe slowly and naturally
- Assume passive attitude
- Continue for 10 – 20 minutes, then sit quietly for a minute
- Practice once or twice a day
 - Benson, H. & Klipper, M.Z. (2000). The Relaxation Response. HarperCollins. ISBN 0-380-81595-8

Kirtan Kirya

- Type of meditation from the Kindalini yoga tradition
- Has been practiced for thousands of years
- Sometimes called singing exercise - involves singing sounds along with repetitive finger movements, or mudras
- The meditation can be adapted to several lengths, but practicing it for just 12 minutes a day has been shown to be beneficial

Kirtan Kriya Research Study

Study finds practicing yoga every day can:

- Improve cognitive functioning
 - Lower levels of depression for caregivers
 - Increased telomerase activity – slowed cellular aging
 - Study involved 12 minute yogic practice of Kirtan Kriya. Performed every day at same time for 8 weeks
-
- Lavretsky, H. **et al.** (2013). A pilot study of yogic meditation for family dementia caregivers with depressive symptoms: effects on mental health, cognition, and telomerase activity. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 28(1): 57–65. doi: 10.1002/gps.3790

Benefits of Kirtan Kriya

- Reduce Stress
- Improve Sleep
- Decrease Anxiety and Depression
- Improves Psychological Well-Being
- Reverses Memory Loss
- Increases Blood Flow to Significant Brain Areas
- Increases Telomerase
 - Khalsa, D.S. (2016). How to Meditate. Tucson, AZ: Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation. ISBN 978-0-9974002-0-5

Mantra

Utilizes primal sounds – practiced for greater attention, concentration, focus, improved short term memory, and better mood. Designed to be uplifting:

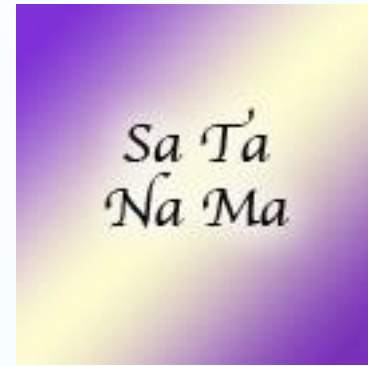
- Sa - birth or infinity
- Ta - life
- Na - death or transformation
- Ma - rebirth



Mantra (cont.)

12 Minutes Per Day:

- 2 minutes out loud
- 2 minutes in a whisper
- 4 minutes silently
- 2 minutes in a whisper
- 2 minutes out loud



Now let's practice . . .

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Questions?



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