



Integrity. Diversity. Community.

Top 10 Reasons to “Make the Connection”

Give yoga a try and discover what it can do for body *and* mind.

A central premise in yoga is “everything is connected.” That’s clear when looking at the health and fitness benefits of yoga that have long been reported by practitioners and are now being confirmed by scientific research.

- 1. STRESS RELIEF:** Yoga reduces the physical effects of stress on the body. By encouraging relaxation, yoga helps to lower the levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Related benefits include lowering blood pressure and heart rate, improving digestion and boosting the immune system as well as easing symptoms of conditions such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, asthma and insomnia.
- 2. PAIN RELIEF:** Yoga can ease pain. Studies have demonstrated that practicing yoga asanas (postures), meditation or a combination of the two, reduced pain for people with conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, auto-immune diseases and hypertension as well as arthritis, back and neck pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, eczema, irritable bowel syndrome and other chronic conditions. Some practitioners report that even emotional pain can be eased through the practice of yoga.
- 3. BETTER BREATHING:** Yoga teaches people to take slower, deeper breaths. This helps to improve lung function, trigger the body’s relaxation response and increase the amount of oxygen available to the body.
- 4. FLEXIBILITY:** Yoga helps to improve flexibility and mobility, increasing range of movement and reducing aches and pains. Many people can’t touch their toes during their first yoga class. Practitioners begin to use the correct muscles to make the movement and, over time, the ligaments, tendons and muscles gradually lengthen and elasticity is increased. These gradual changes can mean that more and more poses are possible.
- 5. INCREASED STRENGTH:** Yoga asanas (postures) use every muscle in the body, helping to increase strength literally from head to toe. And, while the postures practiced in yoga strengthen the body, they also provide an additional benefit of helping to relieve muscular tension.
- 6. WEIGHT MANAGEMENT:** Yoga (even less vigorous styles) can aid weight control efforts by reducing the cortisol levels as well as by burning excess calories and reducing stress. Yoga also encourages healthy eating habits and provides a heightened sense of well being and self esteem.



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Top 10 Reasons – continued

7. **IMPROVED CIRCULATION:** Yoga helps to improve circulation and, as a result of various poses, more efficiently moves oxygenated blood to the body's cells.
8. **CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONING:** Even gentle yoga practice can provide cardiovascular benefits by lowering resting heart rate, increasing endurance and improving oxygen uptake during exercise.
9. **BETTER BODY ALIGNMENT:** Yoga helps to improve body alignment, resulting in better posture and helping to relieve back, neck, joint and muscle problems.
10. **FOCUS ON THE PRESENT:** Yoga helps us to focus on the present, to become more aware and to help create mind body health. It opens the way to improved coordination, reaction time and memory.

“Yoga leads to a body that is easeful, a mind that is peaceful, which results in a life that is useful.” Paraphrased from Swami Satchidananda, a pioneer in bringing yoga to the United States.

For more information on the benefits cited here and more information on studies about the health benefits of yoga visit our website at www.yogadayusa.org or the Yoga Alliance site at www.yogaalliance.org.

Additional research information is available on the following sites:

www.iayt.org (International Association of Yoga Therapists)

www.YogaJournal.com (*Yoga Journal* magazine)

www.yimag.org (*Yoga International* magazine)

www.layogamagazine.com (LA YOGA, Ayurveda and Health magazine)

www.umassmed.edu/cfm (Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School)

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