



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HEALTH & FITNESS IN LOS ANGELES



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Edited by Cynthia Riddle



yoga, are several unique forms: double yoga (yoga with a partner), yoga dance (yoga choreographed to music), and yoga therapy (yoga's healing applications as prescribed by health professionals). From yoga aerobics to a meditative experience, there are a variety of yoga schools and teachers. And you don't have to enjoy standing on your head to experience the profound effects, both internally and externally, of this spiritual sport.

By Mara Carrico of Yoga Lady, Inc.; past president of the Iyengar Association of Southern California.

Yoga Therapy: East-West Back Relief

The benefits of yoga practice are numerous, but participating in a group yoga class may not meet the needs of everyone interested in yoga. For individuals for whom it is important to have a personalized course and progression, the one-on-one sessions of yoga therapy may be more appropriate.

In developing a program of study, the

yoga therapist may consult with medical doctors or chiropractors to more fully understand the needs of his or her client. Thus a synthesis occurs between the modern technological medicine of the West and the ageless wisdom of the East.

Back problems and stress are two of the most common maladies treated by yoga therapists in America. The yoga postures taught for back pain are remarkably similar to exercises in books on combating back problems. Yoga, however, is more of a "work-in" than a "work-out." Postures, called asanas, are done slowly, incorporating the breath. Also, both dynamic and static movement are prescribed. Total concentration is always recommended.

Yoga therapists also offer back patients bio-mechanical reevaluation. Most clients are not aware of how much poor posture contributes to back problems, yet small micro-traumas, such as slumping posture, uneven toting of briefcases or purses, and incorrect sleeping posture can really add up.

Finally, yoga and yoga therapy play a tremendous role in combating stress. The American Medical Association estimates that 85 percent of all illness is due to stress. Yoga techniques of concentration and breath control allow the mind as well as the body to rest.

For more information contact: The American Association of Yoga Therapists, 15 Dorset Lane, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

By Larry Payne of Samata International Yoga and Health Institute

Kundalini Yoga

Yoga as a system is one of the six schools of Indian philosophy expounded upon sometime before the Christian era. The word means "to join, or yoke." The aim is physical and

spiritual, "union" of the body, breath, mind and will, and the uniting of the individual self with the Universal Self.

Some distinctly different forms for doing this are the yoga of knowledge (jnana), the yoga of right action (karma), the yoga of devotion (bhakti), the yoga of absorption (laya), and yoga controlling the body and mind (hatha).

Hatha yoga makes the body strong, flexible, and healthy by using a series of body movements and postures (asanas) which bring order to the muscular, arterial, digestive, respiratory, and glandular systems. Regular practice helps one to work with fixed attention and concentrated thinking, and helps the mind achieve clarity and quick understanding. Another gain is deep, stress-relieving relaxation.

The purpose of all these yogas is to raise the kundalini, the evolutionary power within the body. Kundalini yoga is a diligent performance of asanas with angles and circles, seals (mudras), locks (bandhas), cleansing practices (kriyas), breath control (pranayama), and meditations. It stimulates the life force (prana) that enters and leaves the body.

Kundalini yoga exercises focus intently on the spine and certain nerve and glandular centers within the nervous system. These basic centers, or chakras, are the rectum, genitals, navel, heart, throat, forehead and top of the skull. Through breathing techniques, the downward and upward energy flows meet at the navel point where heat is created. This heat purifies, cleanses, and stimulates. When the energy is concentrated down at the base of the spine, it arouses the power of the kundalini (the word actually means "coil of the beloved" and is described as wrapping 3-1/2 times around the base). Applying internal locks, it rises up the central nervous column, effecting change physically and psychologically at each center until it reaches the brain and the golden cord between the pituitary gland and the pineal gland, which is referred to as the seat of the soul.



Kundalini has often been called the serpent power because of the strength and subtleness of this uncoiling rising movement within. This kundalini rising can also occur in the company of a great Master, in a gathering of great people, or when absorbed in a state of self-forgetfulness, such as music or a sunset or vastness after making love.

The awakening of the kundalini can take moments, years, or even lifetimes. The health and optimum vitality of the body vehicle is cultivated to prepare for the experience, and to allow it to occur. It is a systematic, scientific process experienced in the laboratory of the body. It is earned. It can be bestowed by grace.

Kundalini yoga has been passed down from teacher to student for thousands of years. The techniques are rarely published anywhere, although each spiritual master refers to the kundalini poetically, devotionally.

In this way it is not only a science, but an art. To raise the kundalini is not so difficult; to keep it up is the challenge and the practice.

By Siri Dharma Galliano, teacher of Kundalini yoga and meditation since 1975. She is a student of Yogi Bhajan.