

The Benefits of Yoga



by Pam
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I took my first yoga class in 2001 while I was in high school. Back then it was not quite as popular as it is now. I showed up with a friend and searched for a spot as far in the back as possible. I looked around and thought, “Who are all these hippies?” and “If someone farts I’m totally going to lose it!”

Well, no one farted, but I realized that yoga wasn’t for me. Eight years later, and armed with some extra maturity, I decided to give yoga another shot and I found something that I truly love.

It would be difficult to point out the countless benefits of yoga in one article, so I will start with the first three that became most apparent to me along my journey.

Mindfulness. Yoga is more than simply touching your toes and twisting into weird poses. It’s about accepting yourself and working with what you have including all the potential that exists inside of you. The yoga term Svadhyaya means “the study of self”, and can describe the process you go through during a practice. When doing asanas (yoga poses) you constantly respond to your body and deal with how each pose makes you feel, and which emotions arise while you learn to use your breath, alignment, and mindfulness to carry you through your practice.



Strength. You may think that yoga is all about breathing and stretching (which is a huge part of it), but don't forget about all those poses that you're coming into when you're taking a class. Coming down from high plank into Chaturanga Dansasana (low plank) is a challenge each time, but with each repetition you gain strength and use muscles you may not know you have. Using the strength that you build up while working through asanas will awaken your spirit and muscles.

Flexibility. If you can't touch your toes, you most definitely can do yoga. When starting an exercise routine, you should work on 5 major areas that will help you achieve success; flexibility is one; strength, cardiovascular endurance, nutrition, and muscular endurance are the others. Three years ago, when I decided to take another chance at yoga, I thought I was a descendant of a T-Rex; my arms seemed so short. I found that with time and practice my toes really weren't that far out of reach (and my arms are normal length).

Yoga is not only about a one hour practice on your mat, but it is also about taking the feeling of strength, flexibility, and mindfulness off your mat into your everyday life.

Pam Teves hosts Sunset Yoga at For Taber and other classes in the Southcoast, Massachusetts. You can contact her at southcoastyoga@gmail.com with any questions, or check Southcoast Yoga on Facebook for more details.