

THE
**COMPLETE
IDIOT'S
GUIDE**[®] TO

"If yoga is all about deepening your capacity for joy, this 'idiot's guide' is the Holy Grail."

—Self magazine

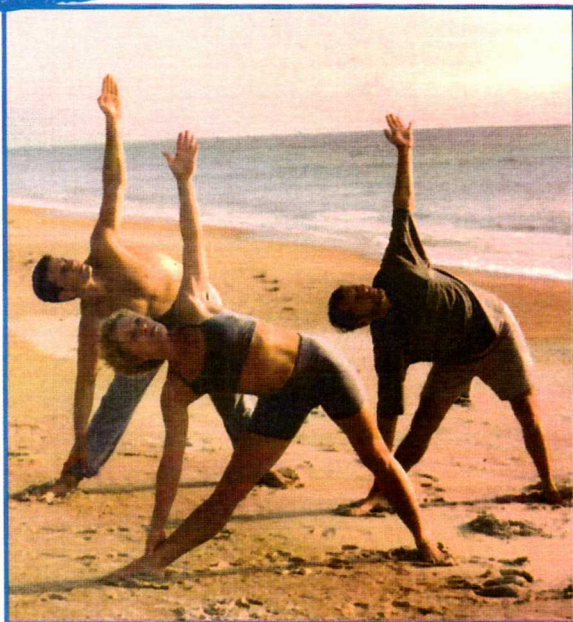
Yoga

THIRD EDITION

Illustrated

- ◆ **More than 300 photos and illustrations** to help you master all the basic positions
- ◆ **Easy-to-follow breathing exercises** to relax your body and calm your mind
- ◆ **Idiot-proof steps** for increasing flexibility and improving posture

Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson



Appendix



Yo Joan!

The “Yo Joan” column began appearing on Joan’s Yoyoga! website in 1996. Letters quickly started coming in from all over the world. Today, Joan writes globally and locally in areas of alternative health care and stress reduction. Go Yo Joan! What’s your question? Write to Joan at www.yoyoga.com.

Q: I want to lose weight quickly. Is yoga for me?

Joan: *Yoga* means “union”—union of bodymindspirit. Yoga isn’t a weight-loss program. It’s a practice and a lifestyle approach that can make us more aware of where we’re out of sync and where we’re in sync. As you study yoga, you will become more keenly aware of your potential and the beauty that’s within you. You’ll grow to also see more clearly the beauty that exists within all of life. When you begin to see this, you begin to bring your life into balance.

For example, let’s say you’re focused on one part of your body that you feel is grossly overweight—let’s say it’s your stomach. Every time you look at your body in the mirror, your eyes gravitate toward your stomach and you become upset. Yoga helps you see that you are more than your stomach. No matter how grand your stomach is, you are ever so much grander than that!

And so, you begin to learn ways of helping your stomach, rather than hurting it. You begin to see it as part of you and not as a separate part of you. In this process, you begin to learn nonviolence. Soon, you develop an appreciation for your stomach and treat it more kindly by what you ingest and also how you move and hold yourself. Soon, your eyes begin to love your stomach. When you look in the mirror, you begin to see a reflection of health. Your stomach size will change as your view of who you are deepens. This is an example of the study of yoga.

Q: I have a very stressful and busy life. Will the time I take practicing yoga help me?

Joan: Yoga is stress-reducing. Yoga works in harmony with the balance of your body and the balance of nature. We spend much of our life fighting nature, trying to control it. For example, on a physical level, gravity is constantly pulling at us. Yoga says yes to gravity! Yoga plays with it. It befriends it. It helps us understand we can actually move our bodies in various directions and gravity can help in the movements. We don't fight gravity. We say "Welcome! Let's be friends!" So if you're looking for an oasis of peace in a stressful world, the study of yoga helps create a more peaceful environment.

Q: My daughter has Downs syndrome. Will yoga help her?

Joan: Because yoga is a study of balance, we can all benefit from studying yoga no matter what our physical or mental condition. Yoga calms the nerves. It helps us take the time to realize that something as simple as one's breath can have a profound influence on one's life and the lives around us. It's not complicated—although some of the poses might appear that way. It's the limitations of the mind that encourages complicated approaches. Some of us don't need advanced poses to derive the benefits of yoga. The benefits come about from a reordering of priorities. A benefit can be as simple as learning to take a slow breath before making an important decision.

I would encourage not only your daughter to take a yoga class, but for you to as well—or, even better, with her. Although the particular struggles we have in life vary from person to person, we're all here, today, intimately connected in this healing journey we call life. According to yoga, we are all one. *Om.*

Q: Do you have to give up meat to practice yoga?

Joan: Many yogis practice vegetarianism, but not all yogis are vegetarians. Nonviolence (*ahimsa*) is a principle that is studied in yoga. There are various ways to bring *ahimsa* more clearly into one's life. Some find the path of vegetarianism to be one of these ways. There are also many other ways, such as abstaining from negative gossip or negative self-talk. What area of your life can benefit from the further development of nonviolence? Vegetarianism might be one way for you.

Vegetarianism does not give someone a kind heart, yet a kind heart often leads to vegetarianism. This might sound like some kind of Zen riddle, so let me explain further: There are many people who are vegetarians who are not kind. They are vegetarians for various reasons—some can not afford meat, others find it healthier to abstain from eating meat, some don't like the taste of meat, still others don't have access to meat, etc. All these reasons for being vegetarian can involve a kind heart, but they don't necessitate a kind heart. A heart that encompasses a sincere love for sentient creatures of all forms is a heart that breathes nonviolence—and this is, indeed, a kind heart.

Q: Will yoga improve my sex life?

Joan: Yoga creates a stronger, more flexible, and more balanced body. This balance extends into all of life. How can your bodymindspirit prosper? As one becomes richer in the knowledge of the self, one becomes richer in the knowledge of all of life. Yoga can help you improve your life—every beautiful aspect of it, and yes, that includes the sexual part.