

# Gentle yoga might benefit daughter

Q: Dear Joan,  
My daughter is three years off treatment for a rare bone cancer. She is 17 years old, and was in 8th grade when she was diagnosed. Because we traveled to another state for treatments, and had to keep up with her schoolwork, it was hard to get her started with a psychologist while under going treatment. When treatments ended, we tried a couple therapists to help her deal with anxiety that she still has from her illness, (scars, both physical and emotional) but nothing has really helped.

A friend suggested yoga classes for her, to help her deal with stress. She also has a friend (16 years old) who is undergoing treatments right now for a rare muscle disorder, who is very stressed out, too. (Neither girl knows how to work through their stress very well, which lends to the theory of stress being involved in bringing on illnesses!). Because I am not knowledgeable about yoga at all, I am not sure what type of yoga class they should take together. The friend suggested Iyengar yoga, but I read a letter you responded to in Yo Joan, where you suggested Ashtanga yoga for someone interested in keeping fit, which they both are—being that they are teenage girls. And so the factors here are: teenage girls, illness, and keeping fit. What type would you recommend, and where would I find that class in our area?  
Thank you so much!  
Caring Mom  
Riverside, Ill.

A: Dear Caring Mom,  
My heartfelt regards to you and your daughter for all your trials this year. I would recommend contacting the Wellness House in Hinsdale, Ill. The phone number is (630) 323-5150. They offer numerous support groups for cancer survivors and for their families ... at no charge. Free gentle yoga classes are offered there too. I would recommend gentle yoga for your daughter. Even though she may be very athletic, this will give her the necessary ingredients to de-stress while also providing opportunities to become stronger and more flexible. We sometimes may think we need intense workouts to de-stress. This is not true. Intensity can simply cause the body to become exhausted. There is a significant difference between exhaustion and relaxation. Exhaustion actually puts more stress on the body. It wears the body down. Whereas, relaxation energizes and restores the body's health building properties.

There is also a wonderful yoga studio

in your area called "Garden of Yoga." Kathleen Wright, the instructor, has a strong Iyengar background. This is a type of yoga training that highly focuses on alignment and the use of props, such as blocks and bolsters. The use of these props helps the body to open further in yoga postures. For example, if your hand can not touch the floor when bending for-



ward, blocks or bolsters are used to rest your hands on. This allows your body to relax into the pose, as compared to forcing yourself further into a pose your body is not ready for. Garden of Yoga's number is (708) 802-1329. You may want to also pick up a copy of the Yoga Chicago newspaper (available at Borders in Oak Brook and numerous other locations or check out their web at [www.yogachicago.com](http://www.yogachicago.com)) for even more local listings of yoga teachers and classes. Keep in touch, caring mom. Your daughter is being surrounded by such good energy, I have total faith in her healing process.

Q: Dear Joan,  
I was wondering if you could clear something up for me. Yesterday, I had a massage that involved some deep tissue work and pressure points. That night and to a

much more severe extent this morning, I felt intensely nauseated and have felt that way all day. Relaxed, but nauseated. Could the two be related? My mother-in-law went with me, and the massage therapist told her to drink a lot of water to flush out toxins. I tried to drink water but it made me feel worse.

I also have a yoga question. During the massage, I discussed my chronic neck pain with the therapist who told me that the muscle I was having trouble with was my levator scapula. She stretched it out by having me put my arm behind my back and pushing against her hand as she pushed down. The stretch felt amazing and lasted for quite a few hours. Is there any yoga pose that would help relieve this tightness? Are there any yoga poses I should avoid?

Your web site is a blessing.  
Thank you,  
Chloe

A: Dear Chloe,  
In response to the first part of your letter, yes, massage can loosen toxins in the body that get into the blood stream. If the bodily systems are functioning smoothly, the toxins are quickly and efficiently removed from the system through the blood and the magnificent cleansing and purifying processes of the body. This process begins working immediately and the results are usually felt immediately, causing one to feel relaxed and refreshed. If the toxins stay in the system longer, they can have the opposite effect which you described. Drinking water (water at room temperature) is a very effective way in helping the toxins move along. Then, after

the massage, simply spend some extra time in the bathroom. Just sit on the bathroom throne for awhile, and wait for your elimination reflexes to kick in. Be patient. Take some slow deep breaths.

If drinking water is unsettling, your stomach may also need some special massage attention. Do ask your massage therapist to include an abdominal (stomach) massage into your full body massage session. For some reason, many massage therapists avoid massaging the stomach. Perhaps because it is such a vulnerable place. And this vulnerability is exactly the reason why this area needs to be regularly massaged by caring and sensitive hands. What is the first area you tighten in defense? You curl up and protect your internal organs — your stomach — where your action turns to passion. The abdomen is the energy center of action. It is right below the heart. It is the seat of our compassion. It is very important to our healing process. If the stomach is weak, the rest of the system is deeply effected. Build the strength of your stomach through massages and yoga asana practice.

The way you breathe during a massage can also aid the purification process. Slow deep exhales help the body to release tensions and toxins. Consciously try and bring more of these slow deep exhales into your massage. It may feel strange at first, but soon it will feel natural. It is a natural way for your body to release. If the nausea continues for a day or more, then I would recommend seeing a doctor to rule out any more serious condition. The condition you describe above tho, is not uncommon. Some of the suggestions I

have offered to you, you may find quite helpful. The massage experience is meant to be enjoyable as well as health building.

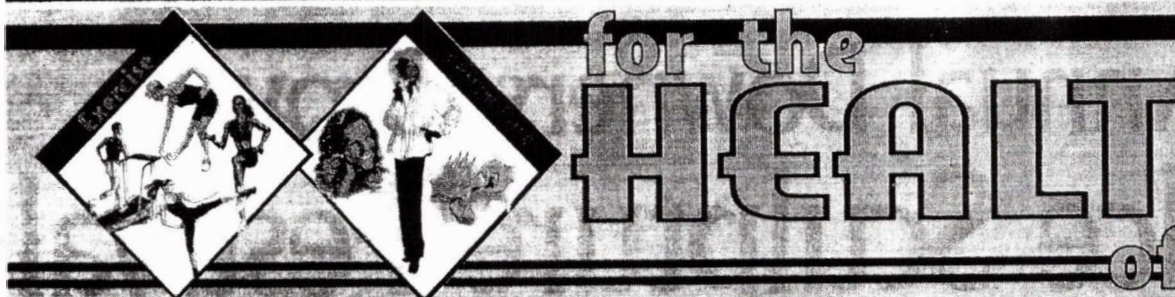
Regarding a yoga pose/exercise (in Sanskrit terminology, the word is "asana"), I would recommend cow pose. Position one hand, palm facing down on top of your head. Position the other hand palm facing out on the center of your back. Keep your spine straight and head facing forward. Take a deep breath. On the exhale, bring the hands toward each other. They do not have to touch. Continue breathing deeply as you hold this stretch for a few slow, deep breaths. Then, switch hands so that the other hand is now on top of head and the other at the center of the back. Repeat on this side. The arm positioning involves the upper part of the pose. The lower part of the pose involves crossing your legs. Seated, the knees eventually cross on top of each other and the heels come along side the body ... in due time.

I hope these suggestions are helpful to you, Chloe. My best wishes are with you along with my hopes that you will continue to be in touch.

Wishing you, Chloe, and all Suburban LIFE readers a blessed new year.

Yours in peace,  
Joan Budilovsky

Joan Budilovsky is a local resident, teacher and national author of numerous books on yoga, massage, and meditation. Write to her at "Yo Joan" at The Suburban LIFE, 709 Enterprise Drive, Oak Brook 60523, or visit her at [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com).



## 'Scales' strengthens a triad of muscles

**Q:** Hi! Can you tell me about "the scales posture." I cannot find a picture or written description of how to do this asana anywhere. I wonder if you can help.

Namaste,  
Kevin

**A:** Tolasana strengthens the wrists, hands and stomach. Sit with legs crossed, palms on floor besides hips. If possible, sit in lotus position where ankles are on thighs. If the lotus position is impossible, simply cross legs. Exhale as you lift feet off floor balancing on hands. Hold as long as you can. Come down, release, and then cross legs with other foot on top. Repeat. Lift. Release.

Hope this helps! "Tola" is Sanskrit for "pair of scales."

Namaste,  
Joan

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Wishing you, Chloe, and all Suburban LIFE readers a blessed new millennium.

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Joan Budilovsky

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# Yoga balances immune system

Good morning Joan,

I have just enrolled for my first ever yoga class commencing Wednesday. I have been told that it is marvelous for stress.

I have a very unusual stress symptom — my skin itches all the time and it is driving me mad. I have been prescribed anti-depressants which I don't want to take and I am scared this damn thing won't go away and I won't find the cause.

Joan, do you think that yoga can ease a skin condition? I know this is a difficult one. I got your excellent "Idiot's Guide" from the local library and although I have never done yoga and haven't a notion what it's all about — your book would encourage anyone to give it a try. Anyway, Joan, it was nice to pour my heart out to someone I don't even know.

So next Wednesday, yoga here I come!

Kind regards,  
Jean

Dear Jean,

First of all, it is brave and commendable of you to reach out and get help for your condition. I am honored that you reached out to me. Once we face our fears, we

can work through them. You are facing yours and reaching out. You are on a very rewarding path that has real possibilities for successfully handling your difficult condition. Your skin condition sounds very much like something called "shingles." I know many people who have been helped through shingles with the external application of aloe vera gel. The aloe vera plant is one worth keeping in your home. The juice in the aloe vera plant has soothing properties for burns and rashes of the skin. If you break off a leaf of the plant, inside is a gooey substance — the



aloe vera gel. Rub this on your skin and let the gel sink in. I do not know exactly what your particular skin condition is and I am not a doctor to offer medical advice. However, I do know, from personal experience, that the gel from the

aloe vera plant has been helpful with rashes and burns. Perhaps it will be helpful for your condition too.

It's extremely wonderful that you are also starting a yoga class, Jean. Yoga balances the body's immune system through its systematic, slow process of body/breath movements. There are eight limbs to the study of yoga. I encourage you to pick up some more yoga books and continue your studies. As noted in the book you have, the first four limbs, which strengthen the life force, are Yamas (abstentions), Niyamas (observances), Asanas (postures), Pranayama (breath control). The next four, which direct the life force, are Pratyahara (detachment), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (pure consciousness).

A steady and consistent practice of the first four limbs will help your body become stronger and healthier. The fifth limb, Pratyahara, will help you in that it is the process of detaching from your senses. We are ruled by our senses. We live in a world and body that are dominated by our senses. The study of Pratyahara helps one to begin to recognize that outside influences, including our sense of touch, taste etc., are just that — influences. They do not determine the peaceful existence that is inherent within each of us. The more we truly realize this, through practice and observation, the more this reality becomes a part of our external existence. This may sound very heavy and esoteric, so let me give you a simple exercise to begin your healing journey in Pratyahara:

Gently place your little fingers and index fingers over your lips holding them closed, your middle fingers gently close your nostrils,

your ring fingers gently close your eyelids, your thumbs close your ears. Open your nostrils, take a slow deep breath. Close off your nostrils and all the other points on the face and head. Do not strain. Only hold for a few seconds. Then release with a full slow exhale, and inhale deeply again. Cover all the points on the head again. Hold for a few seconds, release. As your breath and relaxation becomes more secure, you will be able to comfortably hold your breath for longer periods of time with all the points closed. Also your skin is wanting to quickly change, bring your focus into the retention of the breath. Watch the internal reaction of your eyes, the nose. Watch the mouth. Watch the ears. Shift your focus from your skin to your breath retention, if only for a few seconds.

I am not a healer. I am someone who practices and teaches yoga massage, and meditation. You have within your self, Jean, the capacity and ability for full healing. Continue reaching out. Continue your yoga practice. Continue your yoga practice with discipline. Discipline means every day. Yoga is an internal and external massage. Yoga involves meditation. Yoga is a complete system of body/mind health care. The key to its power is in the discipline of the practice.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

*Joan is a local resident and the expert national author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga," "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage" and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation." Send your questions or comments to Joan via the award winning "Yoyoga!" website at [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com).*

# A HEALTHY OUT

## Reflexology isn't a laughing matter

Dear Joan,  
What does extremely ticklish/sensitive feet say about one's well-being or personality. Is it connected to the way the reflexes correspond to other parts of the body? I am still ticklish but have learned to let go (with laughter) and absolutely love reflexology.

Thanks,  
Tim

Dear Tim,  
Ticklishness says you are a very



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dear and sensitive person. Obviously, your ticklishness does not prevent you from receiving reflexology treatments (foot massages) and loving them as well.

If ticklishness prevented you from experiencing massage, then there are various options to explore.

- Try various massage hand pressures to find a pressure that makes you less ticklish.
- Seek a professional counseling therapist to explore if there are some issues regarding touch that can be effectively explored and resolved through psychotherapy.
- Consult a medical doctor to see if there is a medical condition that would prevent an enjoyable and health building foot massage.
- Experiment with other massage modalities that do not require a stroking touch, like Reiki, Orthobionomy or Shiatsu.

In a professional reflexology session, the therapist may be able to pinpoint for you a specific area of your foot that you may feel as a

reflex to another part of your body. For example, if the arch of your foot is unusually ticklish, this area is considered the reflex area to the digestive organs. Your ticklishness may be in response to some digestive and diet concerns that can be further explored in your reflexology session or with your medical professional. Reflexologists do not diagnose, however reflexology can be an effective tool to heighten your holistic awareness of your body. Reflexology (specific foot massage) is an art that has been around for a very long time. Ancient drawings of foot massage were discovered in Egyptian tombs thousands of years ago.

Since you are able to receive foot massages, Tim, and you love them to boot, keep doing what you are doing. Keep learning and laughing. Keep exploring and loving life. And, Tim, continue being in touch.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

PS. There is a new fabulous massage school that recently opened up in Villa Park called Advanced Anatomy Massage Academy. They offer Saturday massage and reflexology sessions from graduating students at reduced prices. I've checked the school out, and it's wonderful. Dennis Hill, the director, is on the faculty at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, where I am also a faculty member. To make an appointment with AAMA call (630) 832-4217.

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# HEALTH

## Focus needed to master tasks

Dear Joan,  
I was wondering if it is possible to practice more than one type of yoga type exercising, because since I bought your book, "Idiots Guide to Yoga," I have been practicing it.

But recently, I began taking some classes on Dahnhak, which is Korean-based. But I still very much enjoy the Hatha Yoga of India. I was wondering if it was all right to practice both?

Kaleena

Dear Kaleena,

I am not familiar with Dahnhak. To become a master of anything one must be devoted and focused.

If you want to dabble here and there, you can be a talented artist. If you are one-pointed in your focus, the artist and the beautiful painting become one.

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Dear Joan,

I have been a student of Astanga Yoga for about three years. I've also read your "Idiot's Guide to

Yoga" and use it for my home practice.

My first question is about whether or not I should tighten the buttocks muscles when practicing the Cobra, Upward Facing Dog, or Bridge asanas.

Some teachers say to contract these muscles, while others say to leave these muscles soft in order to allow the lower back to stretch fur-

ther and to increase blood supply to the spine.

Also, is it proper form to allow the head to crunch all the way back in asanas like the Camel, or should I leave a little room so I won't crush any vertebrae?

I don't have a problem with letting my head fall all the way back when I'm doing neck rolls, but when I add gravity, it seems like I

could sustain an injury. Isn't there a major artery that runs down the back of the neck?

Thanks for your time in answering these questions. I look forward to more clarity when in these poses.

Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Follow your experienced teacher's instructions in the pose. As for me, I instruct students to strengthen the leg muscles and visualize tucking the tailbone under to lengthen the spine. In tucking the tailbone, you are in effect tightening the buttock muscles.

Regarding the head falling back in Camel, you should have control of your neck muscles in the same way that you tighten the back legs so as not to overstretch the lower back in the earlier poses.

If you let the neck fully fall back, there is not awareness in the pose. You could injure your neck. Lift the neck up, and with full awareness and concentration, tilt the head back as you lift.

The carotid arteries run through the neck. The medulla oblongata, the control center of the universe in your body, is located near the fifth vertebrae of the back of your neck.

Eventually, the study of yoga postures leads one into a meditative state. Unlike the state of Michigan where we may journey out to, the meditative state of being is an internal journey that we have deep within us. It is an inner-core unveiling that one eventually lives and breathes. This peaceful state of being is revealed through the process of meditation.

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit



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# A HEALTHY OUTLOOK.

## Balance yoga practice with a variety of poses

**Q.:** Dear Joan,  
I am writing to you, because I hope it is possible for me to ask a question regarding yoga posture and possible injuries related to incorrect practice.

I have been practicing postures by myself for about six months. I practiced mainly Bhujangasana, Halasana, Sarvangasana and Vipareethakarani for most of the time.

For about 20 days I have incorporated many other postures by following the well-known book, "Yoga: 28-Day Exercise Plan of Richard Hittleman."

In the beginning I read that it is normal to develop some aches in the body due to the fact that the postures awake parts of the body that have had no exercise up till

then.  
Unfortunately what I thought was a temporary pain in my back, due to the exercises, has still not gone away after six months, and has actually become worse.

I have tried to be very careful in not exaggerating the extreme positions, but without any success in getting rid of the pain.

Apart from this ache in the middle of my spine, the regular practice of yoga has brought me many benefits, and I do not want to stop. I dislike the idea but I think I have no choice but to interrupt the postures for now until I find out what the problem is.

Could you please help and perhaps give me some advice? How can I know if it is just due to the intensification of the yoga prac-

tice, or whether I'm doing something wrong?

Many thanks,  
Andrea

**A.:** Dear Andrea,  
You are doing something wrong. It is normal to feel some



aches and pains as we adjust our bodies into new poses that the body is not used to.

However, you mention that your pain has been increasing. This means that you are definitely doing something wrong.

The poses you mention all focus on the area of the back where you have the pain. You need to balance your practice more. If an area of our body gives us pain we must acknowledge this. We must honor the body.

Don't fight it. Approach your body with a non-violent mind. Although the back is crying out for attention do not also ignore the

quieter areas of the body that may be silently planning a rebellion.

My suggestion to you, Andrea, is to balance your yoga practice more with other poses. Stop doing poses that directly effect the area of your back that troubles you.

A good leader surrounds herself with wise council. Your back is very wise. It is surrounded by muscles and tissues to support it. Don't ignore other areas of your body. Reach out for help from this important council within you.

Very importantly, reach out for help from your personal doctor as well. Rule out any injury that you may have sustained.

Give your back a chance to relax. Everyone and every back needs a vacation now and then.

Solve this problem now, Andrea, while it is still not severe.

Namaste,  
Joan

**Q.:** Would doing Yoga poses periodically throughout the day have the same effect as doing them all at once?

Rev. John B. Gabel D.D.

**A.:** Doing one yoga pose for 5 minutes in full concentration and awareness would have a stronger effect than doing an hour of yoga poses without mindful concentration and awareness.

Mindful concentration means being present in the moment. Watching exactly what is happening now, in the body, in the mind, in the area around you.

The mind, in particular, has a tendency to drift to other thoughts

and places. This is one reason why I hardly use music in my classes (although I do use mantras occasionally). Music tends to transport the mind to other places.

Certainly, music has its healing effects. I was/am a musician, after all. I love music. However, music can be more of a hindrance than an aid in the development of mindful concentration when studying the yoga postures.

Eventually, the study of yoga postures leads one to a meditative state. This state of being is consistent. It is an inner-core development that one lives and breathes. It is with one throughout the day and night.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

# H

## No competition in doing yoga

Dear Joan,  
A few weeks ago I had an accident during an Astanga yoga hour. Doing a spinal twist, my hips went one way and the muscles supporting the lower spine went another. Ouch! My own stupid fault, certainly not the teachers.

I saw the lithe young woman in front of me moving easily in all sorts of extreme angles; not recognizing that I was at least twenty years older, much more bulky and rigid in body structure yet trying to move that extra ten percent.

My revelation came suddenly as I am a slow learner. I was semi-prone and not able to move very much without pain so I started reading the book you recommended, "Swami Rama's Yoga and Psychotherapy - The Evolution of Consciousness."

Already in the first chapter, The Body and Hatha Yoga, I began to realize the interaction between physical movement and mental attitude and tension, for

example in his explanation of how "the posture a person takes is a reflection of his state of mind." His explanations of how and why and how to are really very wise, logical and easy to understand.

There is no competition in doing yoga poses, neither with others nor with oneself. It is difficult for me to explain in words but it was sort of like — "Hey, that's what yoga is really all about".

Although I of course have heard about some of the concepts before, this is the first time it has really has started to all come together. It was indeed a revelation. It was certainly worth that little bit of pain. Thanks so much for putting me onto the book!

Ed

Dear Mr. Ed,

Wonderful, wonderful Ed! Not your pain, but that it brought you to deeper understandings of your practice.

You mention that the teacher is not responsible because you are the one in your body making the decisions; however, the teacher has an obligation to teach the principles of yoga's non-competitive aspects. This becomes ever more difficult as poses become more difficult, particularly in an Ashtanga yoga practice.

This type of practice requires a continual movement from one pose into another. The poses in this style of study become increasingly more difficult. The competitive



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mind fits so naturally into this style of practice.

Perhaps this is one reason why this style of yoga study has taken on such strong appeal in America. It is hard to witness the competitive mind and not get caught up in it. Just as students can be competitive in their studies, so too can teachers be.

Although yoga is non-competitive, teachers may still consciously or unconsciously encourage competitiveness in students. This is not meant as a negative judgement of your teacher. My words are only meant to encourage you to continue listening and respecting your body.

Even if everyone in class is putting their foot to their ear, this does not necessarily denote a suc-

cessful yoga practice. Yoga is not gymnastics.

If you notice your mind becoming competitive, close your eyes and listen to what your body is wanting and letting you do. With patience and kindness in your yoga practice, you will be amazed at the ever-deepening realizations you will be making in body and mind.

And, Ed, you are already making them!

Yours in peace,  
Joan

Hello Joan!

Recently I attended my first yoga retreat in the Colorado mountains. The experience was unbelievable.

Since then, I have been practicing yoga and meditation twice daily, morning and evening for 20 min-hr. I feel absolutely incredible.

I do have a question for you though. Some nights I have difficulty falling asleep because my whole body feels like it needs to stretch and stretch.

The best way I can explain this, is my whole body feels like it

wants to yawn and yawn and yawn! Sometimes this also happens to me throughout the day. Is this what is known as an "awakening of the spine"?

Deborah

Dear Deborah,

I have found this to happen to me too! Sometimes I am feeling so

incredibly great, I can't sleep!

Once I did not sleep for a full week, I then got physically sick for a full week. My body needed to balance! Even though you may not feel tired to fall asleep, your body is telling you it NEEDS sleep.

As you say so eloquently, "... my whole body feels like it wants to yawn and yawn and yawn!" Your body is begging you for some sleep! Honor it.

Even if your mind is fully awake, try and honor your body and get some sleep. Soon the body and mind will catch up to each other and you will find your sleep more restful than ever before.

The term "awakening the spine," has been used in various ways, but from my perspective, it is in relationship to the energy system called "chakras" which are based around the spine. As we open up various energy centers, we awaken the spine.

Unlike the chicken and egg, we scientifically know that energy came before the spine. Energy awakens the spine. Yoga, although it may appear as a system in toe

touching, is ultimately an energetic study.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

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# HEALTH

## Studies show positive effects of meditation, physical health

Dear Joan,

Could you please tell me what exactly meditation is?

When I close my eyes and sit and concentrate, nothing happens. What am I doing wrong? How would I know if I am doing it right?

I understand that meditation has great health results — lowered blood pressure, calmness, peace of mind — but what is the difference between closing your eyes to relax and meditating?

Thanks,  
Jill

Dear Jill,

Relaxation is the first step in meditation.

First one must learn how to relax the body at will. One way to do this is to bring your attention to your breath.

Slow your breath down. Watch the movement of your abdomen as it moves with your breath. Watch the abdomen for a few long breaths. Do not force your breath.

You do not need to even hear your breath. Simply observe.

Now bring your attention a little higher to your chest. Watch this area as you breathe. Keep the breath slow.

Imagine your worries and troubles leaving with your exhale. Breathe in fresh clear energy and exhale all your troubles and worries.

Let your shoulders relax down away from your ears. Let your jaw completely relax. Your lips gently close.

Now, try and make the transition between your exhale and your inhale smooth. The exhale smoothly flowing into the next inhale.

Continue to watch this flowing movement of your breath. These are beginning steps into meditation.

Don't worry about doing something wrong. Simply follow these simple steps everyday for a few minutes in the morning, and a few minutes in the evening.

Persist in this practice of watching the breath a few minutes a day for 40 days. It takes approximately this long to begin to see the health building results of this practice.

Meditation helps one to become aware of deeper states of consciousness. These "states" are not akin to states like Idaho or Missouri. "States of consciousness" involve inner travel within one's self for a deeper and truer sense of reality.

This inner travel leads to a deeper understanding and sense of peacefulness that transcends out-



Joan Budilovsky

YO  
JOAN

ward influences. One witnesses the movements of consciousness — thoughts that flutter through the mind.

Soon one begins to realize that these thoughts are changeable and mutable. Then one begins to uncover movements of subconscious thought.

This takes time and practice. Even deeper states of consciousness exist. Through continued meditation practice these deeper inner states of consciousness can be experienced.

It is not a mystery. Access to these deeper states are accessible to everyone who is willing to devote the time and discipline that is needed for this inner journey of

self-realization.

Meditation is not complicated, but the "discipline" of daily meditation practice is quite difficult. And, it is only through the discipline of meditation practice that one can experience meditation.

Although relaxation leads to meditation, relaxation is not meditation. Relaxation is simply the "first step". The next essential ingredient for a successful meditation practice is "discipline."

How does one acquire discipline? Here are some ways to get you started.

- Take a meditation class. The camaraderie of a class will keep you on time and on track.

- Keep your daily meditation time specific. For example, 7 a.m. to 7:15 a.m. is Meditation time.

- Pick a specific place to do your meditating. Preferably an uncluttered place free of obstacles and distractions.

- Use a timer and set it for the length of time you wish to meditate. This way you will not be distracted by time.

How will you know when your meditation is working? You will feel more peaceful in times of stress. You will be less reactive. You will feel more confident and less troubled.

Numerous scientific studies have been documented showing the positive effects of meditation on physical health.

The benefits of the practice are numerous and varied. You will personally experience and know these benefits as you persist in practice.

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit her Yoyoga website at: [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)



# Meditation is haven of peace for the mind

Dear Joan,  
"Yoga: meditation through  
manipulating the body."

Am I close; way off; dreaming?  
My questions really pertain  
more to meditation, I guess.

What works for you? What  
actual effects do you receive? or  
perceive?

Sincerely,  
Brett

Dear Brett,  
How many times have you fall-  
en asleep with your mind racing?  
Perhaps you had a problem at  
work and you tossed it back and  
forth in your mind while trying to  
go to sleep.

Somehow you fell asleep. While  
you were dreaming, you may have

*What you probably are discover-  
ing is that this is a difficult thing  
to do! Your mind has a mind of its  
own! The more you tell your mind  
not to think of pink elephants, the  
more your mind focuses on pink  
elephants.*

*The same principle goes for  
dieters — the more you tell your-  
self you will not have another hot  
fudge sundae, the more you desire,  
crave, and think of hot fudge sun-  
daes!*

*The kind of meditation that  
works best for me involves yoga  
postures. The yoga postures  
strengthen and tone the body and  
spine. This helps me to sit comfort-  
ably for longer periods of medita-  
tion.*

*At the end of every yoga pose is  
a quiet moment of letting go, of  
coming back to the breath. When  
the mind starts acting up, the focus  
is brought again back to the  
breath.*

*For that brief moment when it is  
not a struggle to focus on the  
breath and the mind does not wan-  
der and judgements are not there -  
this is a meditative moment. Even  
if it is a millisecond!*

*As the body becomes freer in  
the pose, meditation becomes the  
pose. Even though some of the  
yoga poses are quite difficult, yoga  
is not about competition.*

*Wherever one is, is exactly  
where one should be. The inner  
subtleties of the body and mind  
become more noticeable.*

*One of the effects of meditation  
is the ability to make clearer and  
more appropriate decisions. Medi-  
tation is the key to getting past  
emotions. Emotions fluctuate like  
the wind.*

*Meditation helps one to develop  
a steadier and calmer personality.  
Meditation also calms the nervous  
system and lowers blood pressure.*

*In our fast paced and stressed  
out world, meditation is a haven of  
peace — a haven that does not  
require use of a car, train, or plane.  
This haven of peace is right here  
now, deep within you and within  
me.*

Yours in peace,  
Joan



Joan Budilovsky

YO  
JOAN

*worked the problem out, or you  
submerged it, or there it was throbb-  
ing in your head when you woke  
up!*

*The mind is powerful and it is  
truly a workaholic. Meditation is  
the ability to clear this busy mind  
while fully conscious.*

*In the yoga sutras, which is an  
ancient text written thousands of  
years ago by an Indian sage  
named, Patanjali, the purpose of  
yoga is stated — "Yoga is the  
restriction of the fluctuations of  
consciousness."*

Congratulations to the first  
graduating class of the new mas-  
sage school in Villa Park,  
"Advanced Anatomy Massage  
Academy." It was an honor to be  
invited to your graduation cere-  
mony April 29. May you continue  
on touching lives and inspiring  
hearts as Certified Massage Ther-  
apists.

*Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher  
and national author on yoga, medita-  
tion, and massage. To reach her visit*

## Deepening awareness enables one to remove layer of anger

Dear Joan,

Humans are extremely complex, and in the majority of people, emotions run rampant.

This, enmeshed with today's hostile society, I find it very unlikely that anyone can go for even a day completely without any act of violence.

Do those of the yoga way feel that they can and should attempt to spiritually transport to a realm where violence is not such the case? It seem almost religious that they believe that an inherent and

*non-violence is practiced.*

*As one becomes more and more aware, one sees more and more clearly how violence creeps into numerous facets of life. From killing a vegetable to sustain one's own life to killing a bug for annoyance.*

*How can anyone live a life of complete non-violence?*

*There are monks of a religious sect in India that adhere to strict non-violence in all aspects of life. They wear no clothes and carefully watch the ground they walk on to avoid stepping on any life.*

*They spend their lives walking from town to town where they are welcomed and greeted with great respect. They are humble and only eat food that is offered them.*

*Most people could not live this way. The villagers know and respect this. They are thankful to these monks for the non-violent presence they offer into their lives.*

*I can't imagine monks like this living in our society as first of all, they immediately would be imprisoned for indecent exposure.*

*You ask, "Do those of the yoga way feel that they can and should attempt to spiritually transport to a realm where violence is not such the case?"*

*In the yogic view, the transport is not to another planet somewhere but to the realm deep within one's own consciousness. It is a process of removing layers that cover the inner blissful state.*

*These layers come in the forms*

*of violence, non-truthfulness, stealing, lust and greed. The process of deepening awareness enables one to remove these layers or veils.*

*These veils are not removed through a sense of guilt or religious morality. They are removed through the process of detaching from the senses.*

*Yoga is a way of making sense by detaching from the senses. The study of yoga is one path in helping one in the process of deepening awareness.*

*Yours in Peace,  
Joan*

Dear Joan,  
A friend of mine went to see her

palmist who told her that she had blocked sexual energy and recommended Kundalini yoga. What about that?

Namaste,  
Christine

Dear Christine,  
Kundalini Yoga is a path of yoga that works heavily with breathwork.

Some of the postures are named differently than in traditional hatha yoga. For example, in Kundalini, the Downward Dog pose is usually referred to as the Triangle pose.

Regarding the specific aspect of unblocking sexual energy, body-

work, of which hatha yoga is one form, has the potential of doing this. However, the objective of hatha yoga is to ultimately detach from the senses.

Detaching from the senses is quite difficult. From a yoga perspective, to get past the physical desires one has to know the body! This is where it gets tricky for many people start out wanting to quell desires only to get lost in them.

I believe an ancient Indian text examines this conflict the best — "While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them; and from

such attachment lust develops; and from lust, anger arises.

"From anger, delusion arises; and from delusion, bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost; and when intelligence is lost, one falls down again into the material pool."

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit her [Yoyoga website at: www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)



fundamental characteristic of humans can be striped while individuals continue to live out the mortal days of their life.

This is not in any way an attempt to disrespect yoga for I have great respect for the discipline. These are just my humble thoughts.

Michael

Dear Michael,  
Thank you very much for your insightful questions. I think the answers are ones that can continue for quite some time, and most definitely beyond the few words I am able to share with you here.

In the study of yoga, ahimsa or

# Yoga may help relieve carpal tunnel suffering

Dear Joan,

I am working on a research paper regarding carpal tunnel syndrome and the effects of yoga on this condition.

There have been studies showing an improvement in conditions of patients performing certain yoga techniques. I was curious as to whether or not you have any opinion on using yoga in treating such syndromes over the surgery, or other medical solutions.

I would be thankful for any thoughts you might have on the subject!

Sincerely,  
Jo

Dear Jo,

I have holistic views toward carpal tunnel or any physical injury.

Sometimes the pain of carpal tunnel can be relieved by intensive shiatsu massage. This type of massage focuses on pressure points and energy flow in the body. The pressure points for the wrist are not necessarily in, or even near the wrist.

For example, you may have a blocked tsubo (pressure point) in the levator scapula muscle in the shoulder that travels down to your wrist. Although the problem is felt in the wrist, its origin very likely may be in the shoulder.

Until the pressure is relieved at the origin, the problem will keep reoccurring, even after surgery.

By holding certain massage points on the body and applying directed pressure via the thumbs, the knots of tensions in the muscles often can release. These knots of tension not only effect the muscles, but also effect the nerves that run through the muscles.

Myofascial release is another form of massage that works with pressure points in the muscles to reduce tensions and pain in other parts of the body.

It usually takes several sessions of massage for the build up of tensions to let down their guards or for the knots to melt. Once the ten-

massage to improve overall circulation and reduce stress.

Many people turn to surgery for help in relieving the severe pain associated with carpal tunnel syndrome. I would recommend first discovering from where the pain stems before contemplating any surgical procedures. I would find a qualified massage practitioner in your area to work with you and your doctor.

Obviously, I consider massage to be of significant aid in working with carpal tunnel syndrome, but since you did ask specifically about yoga, I will also expand on yoga postures that could be helpful.



Joan Budilovsky

YO  
JOAN

I would recommend shoulder opening poses for people with carpal tunnel syndrome. Poses that involve spinal twists are also very helpful. I will explain two yoga poses to begin working with:

● Side angle stretch

Feet separated widely, face one foot out. Bend knee of this foot to right angle. Turn upper body to face this knee. Rest the arm closest to this bent knee on the thigh. Keep back leg strong and straight. Extend the other arm over your head. As you advance in this pose, bring the arm that is resting on the

thigh under this bent knee. Bring your other arm around your back. Eventually, connect your hands together behind your back. This is an incredible shoulder opener. Breathe deeply for a few long breaths in the pose before releasing it and stretching the other side.

● Standing spinal twist

Feet separated in wide stance, bend forward at the hip with a flat back. Bring one arm toward the floor. Twist toward the other arm and bring this arm straight up toward the sky. Look up toward the sky. Hold the twist for several long, slow breaths. Then switch arms and twist in the other direction.

Do not put too much pressure on wrists in poses that invert the body upside down. Even if everyone in the class is doing a pose that puts pressure on your hands — such as a headstand — ask your teacher for modifications of the pose that will accommodate your healing wrists.

A knowledgeable instructor should be able to direct you into appropriate poses for your condition to heal. It took time for this condition to build, and it will take time for it to resolve itself.

Would love to read your finished research paper, Jo. I am in your corner with two thumbs up!

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit her [Yoyoga website](http://www.yoyoga.com) at: [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)

## HEALTH

# Iyengar yoga extremely helpful for people with back injuries

Dear Joan,

*I just had a laminectomy and discectomy. There was no other choice, I am trying to find out what type of yoga I could take to help my back.*

*I live in New York and was hoping you knew of anyone out this way. I use to study martial arts in Chicago and have studied tai chi for over 25 years, along with kung-fu. I find tai chi too stressful on my body and my energy is being blocked.*

*I work as a paramedic with the New York Fire Department. I was injured on the job but am afraid I won't be able to do this type of work anymore.*

*Please can you give me some help. I need it for my spirit also.*

Thank You  
Marc

Dear Marc,

It is often through the deepest trials in life that we find our deepest insights.

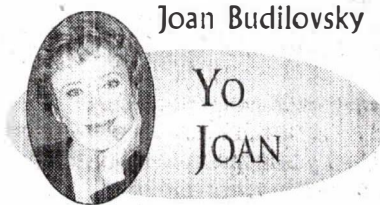
No doubt, these are very difficult times for you, Marc. First the pain regarding the spinal problems, and then the realization that a career change is most likely in order.

You have been working in an honorable profession, Marc. You have helped many people. This is extremely important. Although the contemplation of a career change is now upon you, it is important to recognize the work you have been involved in has been of great service.

As you contemplate a career change, Marc, consider the many

rewards of your past career and focus on these rewards as you move into another career. Although pain can make us contemplate a total change in our life path, it also can be an opportunity to strengthen our convictions.

I encourage you to read Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech. Mandela is a man who spent decades in a prison dungeon. He was regularly tortured. His eyes were permanently injured and he can no longer be in direct sunlight.



Yet, his inaugural speech speaks eloquently of light. For although he can no longer face the light of day, the magnificent light within him could not be beaten out of him. He continues to be a beacon of hope for others. He and his fellow prisoners turned their torture chambers into a school for learning.

On the turn of the millennium, he even went back to that very prison to light candles, pray and continue the movement forward without dismissing the past. The past is significant. It can help us deepen our spirit in the choices we make in the present and for the future.

Regarding your hatha yoga practice for your condition, I

would recommend contacting an Iyengar-trained yoga teacher in your area. Iyengar-styled yoga uses props to support the positions of the body. This is important for you because hatha yoga postures are held for specific periods of time. This is why it is important after surgery to work with someone who understands your specific limitations and does not lead you into poses that may be more harmful than helpful.

Iyengar yoga is a style of yoga that is extremely beneficial for those of us who have undergone surgery or with specific physical limitations. Just as in Chicago, there are many Iyengar trained teachers in the New York City area.

Simply check in the phone book under yoga and start calling yoga studios. Ask specifically for an Iyengar-trained teacher. Find out where they studied and for how long. Check out their qualifications.

Above all, trust your instincts and go slow with your practice. You can most definitely improve your condition. Although the pain may be great for you now, Marc, the increasing depth of your spirit and the knowledge you will gain through this healing process will be even greater.

Namaste,  
Joan

*Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit her Yoyogawebsite at: [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)*

H

# Iyengar yoga extremely helpful for specific physical limitations

Dear Joan,  
I just had a laminectomy and discectomy. There was no other choice. I am trying to find out what type of yoga I could take to help my back.

I live in New York and was hoping you knew of anyone out this way. I use to study martial arts in Chicago and have studied tai chi for over 25 years, along with kung-fu. I find tai chi too stressful on my body and my energy is being blocked.

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pain regarding the spinal problems, and then the realization that a career change is most likely in order.

You have been working in an honorable profession, Marc. You have helped many people. This is extremely important. Although the contemplation of a career change is now upon you, it is important to recognize the work you have been involved in has been of great service.

As you contemplate a career change, Marc, consider the many rewards of your past career and focus on these rewards as you move into another career. Although pain can make us contemplate a total change in our life path, it also can be an opportunity to strengthen our convictions.

## Nelson Mandela's 1994 Inaugural Speech

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.  
We ask ourselves,  
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
Actually who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.  
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking  
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.  
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.  
As we let our light shine,  
We give other people permission to do the same:  
As we're liberated from our own fear,  
Our presence automatically liberates others.

I encourage you to read Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech. Mandela is a man who spent decades in a prison dungeon. He was regularly tortured. His eyes were permanently injured and he can no longer be in direct sunlight.

Yet, his inaugural speech speaks eloquently of light. For although he can no longer face the light of day, the magnificent light within him could not be beaten out of him. He continues to be a beacon of hope for others. He and his fellow prisoners turned their torture chambers into a school for learning.

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Above all, trust your instincts and go slow with your practice. You can most definitely improve your condition. Although the pain may be great for you now, Marc, the increasing depth of your spirit

and the knowledge you will gain through this healing process will be even greater.

Namaste  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and the path to health. Visit her at [www.yogaweb.com](http://www.yogaweb.com)

## HEALTH

# Diminish depression with yoga, meditation

Dear Joan,

My name is Russell, and a few months ago I bought your *Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation*.

First off, I want to thank you for writing such a wonderful and beautiful book. I have been meditating just about every day for a month using the tips and techniques you wrote about. Although I know I am in the extreme novice stage of my meditation practice, I can already tell that it will have a very positive influence in my life in the months and years to come. Maybe a better way to say it is that I have faith that it will.

However, I do have a concern regarding my meditation practice and hope you can help me.

About two months ago, I began taking an anti-depressant for a major depression that had been giving me trouble for the past year. I have had trouble with depression

of healing that has helped many people suffering from depression.

Depression is very real and much more common than most people might think. Many factors may influence depression, including diet, heredity, weather, societal and personal changes as well as chemical imbalances. Hatha yoga, particularly the breathwork called pranayama, may have significant effects on mood elevation. Once you have established yourself with a steady and consistent pranayama practice, you may want to discuss with your doctor the possibility of reducing your medication dosage.

The point is, you need to be consistent and disciplined in your practice before you make changes in your tools for decreasing your depression.

See how you are doing a month from now with your meditation practice. Be sure to speak to your doctor about your meditation practice. If your doctor does not believe meditation may help with your depression, perhaps you can run off some of the many studies done that support findings of meditation's ability to help depression.

Check out the Office of Alternative Medicine on the Internet for significant and current studies. Many new studies are being done all the time.

Hatha yoga postures may also raise moods. Physical activity of various kinds may raise moods. The problem is when one is depressed, one does not want to move.

Sign up for a class that will help to motivate you in movements. Movement is very important in working with depression. "Feeling down, move around. Feeling great, meditate."

I would recommend a regular yoga practice before meditation practice. Just 15 minutes of yoga practice before going into a seated meditation practice may make the meditation practice easier, more comfortable and very possibly more powerful.

You are on a powerful road. You are reaching out and unveiling a world of inner beauty.

Namaste,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky



YO  
JOAN

my entire life. Although I was reluctant to start medication, I figured it was the best thing to do under the circumstances.

I question whether the anti-depressant might be harmful to my meditation practice. I'm worried that it may numb or cancel out the effects of my meditation sessions the longer I stay on it.

Meditation is becoming a very important factor in my life and I would hate to do anything to block its benefits.

Sincerely,  
Russell

Dear Russell,

I would not attempt to debate your doctor and your prescriptions. I know how important various medications are for people's health. Each person has a unique body chemistry to contend with.

Have you also explored psychotherapy for your depression? This is another important avenue

## HEALTH

# 'Yield' the sign for meditation

Dear Joan,  
What is the first good sign I can expect to see in my meditation practice?

Stan

Dear Stan,

"Yield"

In your physical stillness, the emotions walk on by. Watch them as they move through you and past you without crashing into them. It has been scientifically proven that we each use only a very, very small percentage of the brain...1 percent, 5 percent, perhaps Einstein-types use a whopping 10 percent. Most of us are swimming in the sea of our subconscious thought, and effectively drowning there.

Here is a visualization exercise for you:

Envision a large circle. This large circle is your "subconscious." Within this large circle of your subconscious, there exists a very small circle that is your "conscious." A regular practice of yoga and meditation increases the size of your small "conscious circle." The large "subconscious circle" then becomes smaller as the conscious circle expands and begins to fill the large circle up. Your consciousness expands as your subconscious thought becomes realized.

This is what yoga does. Meditation and hatha (the physical postures) are part of the study of yoga. A regular practice of hatha and meditation increases your conscious mind. Hatha and meditation practice uncovers subtleties of your subconscious mind and slowly these subtleties become part of your conscious mind. In this process, you become more aware. This awareness leads one into deeper states of self-realization.

Namaste  
Joan

Hi,

I'd like to know if you could explain to me briefly a few exercises or postures that I could do to stretch my fingers and stimulate blood circulation in my hands.

Thanks,  
Max

Dear Max,  
Here are three separate stretches:

● Downward Facing Dog Pose.

Bring yourself to your hands and knees. Lift the knees off the floor and bring the tailbone up. Form a triangle with the floor, the floor being the base of the triangle. Let your head hang down. The knees stay bent. Straighten your arms and separate your fingers wide. Bring the heels of your hands up off the floor and let the stretch go into your fingers. Breathe deeply for a few breaths before coming back down.

● Bring your hands together in a prayer like position.

Pull the hands apart but keep the finger tips together. Press the finger tips hard against each other keeping the rest of the hands apart. Hold for three long breaths. Release. Repeat this several times whenever there is strain in your hands.

● Interlace the fingers. Stretch the arms up over your head, straighten the elbows, and turn



Joan Budilovsky

Yo  
JOAN

the back of the hands to face toward your head. Push the palms of your hands toward the sky. Hold for three long breaths. Bring the arms down for three long breaths. Repeat.

I have no doubt that you'll find these stretches very handy, Max.

Yours in Peace,  
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is a local teacher and national author on yoga, meditation, and massage. To reach her visit her [Yoyogawebsite](http://Yoyogawebsite.com) at: [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com) or through her outdoor yoga and meditation classes at York Township. Additional information about the classes is available by calling (630) 629-0886.

# Practicing yoga can have benefits

Dear Joan,

I've been practicing yoga at home for this whole summer (getting ready to teach 24 wonderful first graders!).

Recently I was diagnosed with hearing loss and the doctor wanted to do an MRI on my brain — scary!

My first attempt I felt extreme anxiety and couldn't go through with it. This morning I tried again with the help of a sedative. But I also very carefully practiced Shavasana throughout the hour-long procedure.

It very much helped me ignore the machine close about my head, and loud noise going on.

I just kept breathing in/out/in/out and relaxing any part of me that tensed up.

Focusing on my breath instead of my uncomfortable circumstances helped me a great deal.

Thank you for re-introducing yoga into my life (I practiced maybe 30 years ago for awhile).

Namaste,  
Marilyn

Dear Marilyn,

It's letters like yours, Marilyn, that are a testament to the many benefits of a yoga practice. Thank you for sharing your experience.

For readers who do not know what Shavasana is, it is a yoga relaxation pose that works to quiet the body and mind while remaining fully conscious.

Please write back, Marilyn, and let me know the results of your tests. My daily meditations will include your continually improving health.

Yo Joan!

I just got back from a summer

Yo  
Joan

-----  
Joan  
Budilovsky



in Maine as a counselor at a children's camp.

As you can imagine, managing a cabin of 14 10-year-olds can be a stressful operation!

While I was there I purchased the CIG to Meditation. I immediately began feeling more relaxed and connected to the universe.

One of the easiest and most effective meditations in your book, mindfulness, helped me the most.

As I walked to the lake everyday to lifeguard, I noticed everything around me ... the sunlight poking through the trees, the smell of the fresh plant life carpeting the woods, the wind gently blowing on my face, etc... It really made a difference.

By the end of camp, my superior was giving me my performance evaluation, and told me that I was one of the most relaxed and down to earth counselors he'd ever had!

I just wanted to thank you and encourage everyone to live more mindfully.

Thanks,  
Tyler

Dear Tyler,

And what a beautiful way to complete this edition of "Yo Joan." I am so happy to have reminded you, so that you could remind all of us, to be more mindful. Many thank yous from all of us!

Yours in peace,  
Joan

*Joan Budilovsky is the national author of numerous best-selling books on yoga, massage and meditation. She is also a local area resident and teacher. Budilovsky will teach yoga at the York Center Park District, 1609 S. Luther Ave., Lombard, Saturdays, through Nov. 4. Classes are available from 9 to 10:30 a.m. and more information is available by calling (630) 629-0886. Contact her via her Yoyoga Website at [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)*



Lifestyle

# Suggestions offered for yoga

Dear Joan,  
Where can I learn White  
Tantric or Tantra yoga in or  
around Glen Ellyn?  
Sincerely,  
Brian

Dear Brian,  
Explore the bi-monthly free  
newspaper called "Yoga  
Chicago." It available at many  
local bookstores and health food  
stores. It includes a listing of  
teachers of various traditions in  
it who teach all around Chicago  
and the Suburban areas.  
You can locate it on the web  
at [www.yogachicago.com](http://www.yogachicago.com). Or  
call them at (773) 989-6767.

Dear Joan,  
I am somewhere between an  
atheist and agnostic. It seems  
the majority of yogis believe in  
something spiritual. I am looking  
for something like the yamas  
and niyamas, and beyond, to  
help me raise my two little ones.  
I have one book on the Yoga  
Sutras but it is really philosophical  
and a bit too deep for me.

Do you recommend any  
authors? And are there any  
other books you recommend  
that explore how to love and  
respect the earth and all its crea-  
tures without too much refer-  
ence to a god?

As always, Joan, your advice  
is greatly appreciated. You are  
such a beautiful person. Love to  
you and Nanasta,  
Julie

Dear Julie,  
Yoga comes out of India

Yo  
Joan

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where the predominant religion  
is Hindu. Yoga is associated with  
many of the Hindu spiritual  
texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita  
and the Upanishads. Yoga is not  
a religion by itself, but it can be  
a part of one's religious beliefs.

The body/mind/soul connec-  
tions can be attributed to all reli-  
gious practices for those who are  
not religious, the body  
/mind/soul connections can still  
be practiced and developed on  
their own.

The 'yamas' in the yoga phi-  
losophy consist of the studies of  
non-violence, truth, non-stealing,  
non-lusting and non-greed. The  
niyamas consist of purity, con-  
tentment, self-discipline, self-  
study, and divine inspiration.

The last Niyama (observance)  
of yoga is called in Sanskrit,  
"Ishvara-Pranidhana" - translat-  
ed as "Centering on the Divine."  
This Niyama focuses on the  
relinquishment of the ego.

Whether the Divine exists  
within your life as Jesus,  
Buddha, Nature, it is considered  
a profoundly deep focus of con-  
centration and attention in this  
important Niyama. You mention

your deep feelings of nature,  
perhaps this is your way of con-  
necting to the power that is  
beyond your/our influence, but  
deeply embedded in our exis-  
tence.

Life is good. In fact, it is  
beyond good, it is perfection. In  
fact, it is beyond perfection, it is  
bliss. In fact, there are no facts,  
for it is ultimately a feeling state  
that defies definition and can  
only be experienced through  
self-realization. A book on the  
yoga yamas and niyamas that I  
would highly recommend is  
"Yoga of the Heart" by Alice  
Christensen of the American  
Yoga Association. It is an artfully  
crafted book, simply written and  
beautifully explored, with a  
modern day look at ancient  
yogic principles.

I just returned from teaching  
yoga, meditation, and massage  
at a DeMello Spirituality  
Conference in Elderson, N.J.  
Morning and evening yoga class-  
es were taught overlooking the  
majestic Atlantic Ocean. The  
weather was beautiful.

Deep, spiritual, loving light  
radiated from all the partici-  
pants. I do believe in a higher  
power, Julie. I saw this power at  
work this weekend. I see it at  
work right now. I see it in the  
beauty of your kind words to  
me, Julie. Thank you with all my  
heart.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be  
sent to her Yoyoga Web site at:  
[www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)

# 'Power yoga' can offer challenges to routine

Dear Joan,  
I have tried out your training routines in the back of "The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga," but I am finding them too easy. I was wondering if you could make me a routine.

I have tried out the balance poses, but I am finding them very easy because I used to do Martial Arts before I started body building, so now I am quite strong and have good balance. (I hope I am not being big headed, there are probably harder balancing poses I can't do!)

So, really I am after a Yoga routine that has a lot of flexibility and some strength and balance poses. I hope I am not being rude or anything asking for a routine. Or have you written any more books or do you recommend any?

Thank you,  
Adam

Dear Adam,  
Pick up the book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Power Yoga," or another book called, "Power Yoga," by Beryl Bender Birch.

These books focus on more strenuous routines of sun-salutations. Sun-salutations are a series of yoga poses combined into a flowing movement. Power yoga expands on this series and incorporates quite challenging postures as one progresses physically. This might be just what you are looking for. All the best to you on your ever building yoga studies.

Yo  
Joan

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Joan  
Budilovsky



Hello Joan,  
I love your Website. I have a couple of questions. I have recently begun a morning walking routine, but I'm not sure of how to incorporate it into my yoga schedule.

I've always done yoga in the morning but I've found that I like to walk in the morning, too. What practice should come first? Should I do yoga first, as usual when I wake up, then take my walk immediately following, or vice versa?

Also, could you suggest any books for Pranayama techniques? I'm looking more specifically for techniques dealing with panic, anxiety and sleeplessness.

Many thanks. Most sincerely,  
Beth

P.S. I love your "Complete Idiots Guide to Meditation" ... it's written so well ... It's made meditation much less complicated for me.

Dear Beth,  
I would recommend doing what feels best to your body and

sticking with it. See which feels better, to walk first or hatha first.

Some find that hatha (the physical postures of yoga) prepares them for a more enriching walk. Others find that the walk prepares them for more enriching hatha. The two work beautifully together either way. They are a wonderful way to combine nature with your practice. I highly recommend this for a yoga practice. In fact, I do this myself. I usually walk first and then hatha, but I would recommend either way depending on your inclinations.

Regarding books on Pranayama (Breathwork) tech-

niques, we do have some in the book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I would also recommend books by Swami Rama, "Path of Fire and Light," "Science of Breath," and any of his many other books. I consider him to have been a master in his ability of sharing his powerful hatha practice in the written form.

Slow movements (hatha yoga) along with deep breathing exercises (pranayama) can help reduce feelings of anxiety, restlessness and sleeplessness. They are stress-reducing.

I would highly recommend for you a yoga class that

addresses clearly your concerns. Find a teacher you relate to and tell her of your specific needs. Find a class that consists of a good portion of breathwork. Kundalini Yoga classes might be of special interest to you because of the heavy emphasis on breath in this style of yoga study.

A variety of yoga classes and teachers, addressing your specific needs, are out there these days in large supply.

Yours in peace,  
Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her *Yoyoga* Web site at: [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)

## Lifestyle

# Writer seeks advice on yoga during pregnancy

I am just starting out on yoga and find your book "Idiot's Guide to Yoga" very informative and fun to read. However, I can't seem to find any reference to pregnancy and yoga.

I am going through in vitro fertilization and my doctor's orders are "no strenuous exercise." My yoga teacher instructs us in "Yoga for Eternal Happiness," which I believe is an energy yoga.

I have been told (by the nurse's) to not participate in yoga. When is it OK to practice

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yoga again? I pray that I am fortunate enough to be in early pregnancy. Thank you.

Namaste,  
Josephine

Dear Josephine,

Your nurses are wise. Not all yoga instructors are experienced with or knowledgeable of the special physical concerns that pregnancy brings.

If you already had a regular yoga practice before your pregnancy, it would most likely be quite fine to continue your practice with some simple modifications to yoga positions.

However, as a new yoga practitioner, it is important that you study yoga with an instructor experienced in pregnancy yoga. There are some wonderful books on the market now specializing in

pregnancy yoga. Why not share one of these books with your nurse and doctor? Ask their opinion in relationship to your special pregnancy.

As we are all physically different, so are our pregnancies. Keeping in mind that yoga is more than the physical postures. It is also a study of non violence in thought, word, and deed. I can not think of a more beautiful study to bring into your baby's forming life right now.

I would suggest you pick up some more yoga books and study the concept of ahimsa or non-violence. Surely, your baby will appreciate and feel your studies in peace.

# Headstand position can help improve blood flow

Dear Joan,

I am only 19 years old and I am already starting to notice spider veins and blue varicose veins on my legs. I am very worried because more and more are becoming visible.

I wanted to know if there were some yoga postures I could do to help prevent more from surfacing and maybe it would even help the ones that I have now. Also, I stand on my feet a lot at my job and I think that could be contributing to these factors.

Plus, it is actually painful at times on my legs due to these veins. Especially after I'm done working it hurts. I need your help because I feel I'm too young to be having problems like this already and I want to prevent it from getting worse.

Jeannie

Dear Jeannie,

Believe it or not, Jeannie, many people have these same problems at all different ages.

Varicose veins happen when the vein ducts back up and get clogged. Spidery veins that appear on the legs are not necessarily varicose veins. They can be broken superficial blood vessels that are not painful and simply a cosmetic nuisance.

Once these veins have appeared, cosmetics or surgical procedures are the only way to remove them. Or an attitude adjustment is also helpful — that is what I would recommend. You are certainly more beautiful than the lovely veins on your legs.

Varicose veins, on the other hand (or leg), are often painful and are to be treated with special care in yoga postures and massage. You mention your veins hurt you. I would recommend that you get a doctor to examine your legs.

Let your physician determine if you indeed do have varicose veins and also rule out any blood clot formations in the veins. If your veins are clotting, there are medications that can reduce and even eliminate the clots.

Since the constant pull of gravity can take a toll on our physical bodies and on our circulation

Yo  
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yogis regularly turn the world upside down and into the headstand. The headstand helps the venous blood return to the heart less effortlessly. This venous blood flow is very important to the healthy functioning of the body chemistry. Veins carry used blood back to the heart where the blood is cleaned and purified for re-circulation. We all want blood that is movin' and groovin' to the heart beat.

A healthy vegetarian diet combined with a regular practice of inverted postures can encourage a healthier functioning of the continual blood flow inside the body. It is important, though, to get your doctor's go-ahead before beginning inversions.

If a headstand seems a long ways off right now, try these two simpler yoga positions on the floor and on a regular basis:

- 1. Lie on your back with feet propped up against the wall. Rest here as long as you comfortably can.
- 2. Lie on your back, roll your legs over your head and bring your knees toward your ears. Rest here for a few deep breaths.

Upside down, and all around, yoga can improve your health. If the above simple moves make your body long for an overhaul, haul yourself to a yoga class instead.

Dear Joan,

I purchased your book yesterday, "Idiot's Guide to Meditation," I love it. I originally had it from my local library but it's too good not to have in my collection.

The reason for my letter is this: I have no visualization ability. I close my eyes and see nothing (even though I read

OK), and I would love to be able to see in my mind's eye.

I do not have a yoga teacher but choose to walk alone. I am 49 years old. It's only in the past few years that I have been more committed to my yoga practice and books like yours are a wonderful assistance. I do not know if you can help me solve my problem. I have tried various exercises without success. Does it really matter?

Peter

Dear Peter,

I have experienced the same meditation "problem" you describe. I used to take meditation classes just to

find out what I was doing wrong. It seemed like everyone I knew could experience intricate visualizations in their meditation practice and I saw nothing.

I remember sharing my problem with my meditation teacher in class. She then instructed our meditation class to close our eyes and visualize a rose. I was very frustrated because I did not know how to visualize the rose. She asked me if I had any experience of the rose at all when I closed my eyes.

I could somewhat sense the rose as a feeling state, though I could not see it. I could not exactly touch it either, but I felt a sense of the rose. She told me that this is

the essence of meditation. It is not necessary to see the rose. Not all of us can.

The feeling state is a very important part of the meditation process and this is what the visualization process leads to. Her words were very important to me, and obviously still are. They encouraged me to continue my meditation practice. I hope my relating this story to you, Peter, will encourage you to continue yours. Do keep in touch.

Yours in peace,

Joan

Send your letters to Joan via her Yoyoga Website at [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)

Lifestyle

# Yoga can be helpful in healing process

Dear Joan,  
I am a 37-year-old female mother of three. I also am a registered nurse and work about 48 hours a week. As you may already know that my profession makes numerous demands on not only my body, but also my psyche.

This past year I have experienced the normal aging process but I am afflicted with chronic pain that stays with me 24-7. I have plantar fasciitis and have chronic upper and lower back pain which also includes hip pain and knee pain. It is mostly muscle tension in nature.

Over the last 1-1/2 years I have lost approximately 40 pounds primarily for my back and foot pain. Although it has helped, I know that I need something more.

As a newby to yoga, I do not know much, but have read a few articles. I am really interested in yoga for the primary reason of wanting to feel better physically and mentally.

I am overall a very healthy person with no major health problems. Just have some annoying symptoms such as chronic back and leg pain,

Yo  
Joan

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Budilovsky



heartburn (gastric reflux disease), hemorrhoids (no wonder because I am on my feet so much), and lack of sleep (because of all listed above).

I would love to come to a class of yours, But I am not sure which class is for me and where I should begin. If you could assist me with where to start I would truly be indebted to you! I hope to meet you and be able to share with you a beginning of healing for myself as I truly believe that we are brought together with others for a reason.

Be it a positive or a negative experience, we all have the ability to choose the outcome of that relationship and create a reflection of our true spirit that will impact others. As we are both in the profession of

helping others, I would appreciate any help that you can give me.

Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon.  
Sincerely,  
Mary

Dear Mary,

I am sure you are not the only person reading this who is in the healing profession and in need of some serious healing. I am very glad and honored that you wrote to me.

*Treadmills and weight machines are all fine and dandy for losing weight, building strength, or staying trim, but if we are looking for an avenue of fitness that incorporates healing, there are much better alternatives to turn to. Yoga being one. Massage being another. Meditation being yet a third.*

*The back pain you mention will make the meditation alternative difficult, not impossible, but difficult. So, I would recommend a regular practice of gentle yoga movements along with regular, weekly massages.*

*Massage can do wonders for blood circulation and overall healthy conditioning of your internal organs. I see Swedish mas-*

*sage and yoga both as forms of massage. One is passive and one is active.*

*In yoga, you actively massage your body through the movements of the postures. In a standard Swedish massage, you permit another to massage you, and you are the passive receiver.*

*You mention, Mary, that you, "Just have some annoying symptoms such as chronic back and leg pain, heartburn, hemorrhoids, and lack of sleep." Any symptom that is "chronic" is certainly more than an "annoyance." A chronic condition is with you night and day. One must learn to live with the chronic condition on a permanent basis or seek to alter the condition.*

*A "disease" is when the body is out of ease and in a state of stress. The postures of yoga help to reduce symptoms of stress. Massage also reduces stress. Diet is yet another healing alternative that can reduce stress. How is your diet? An unhealthy diet can cause heartburn and lack of sleep. Of course, as a nurse, you know this. But sometimes being in a class with fellow students with similar healthy objectives can be a boost for the*

*willpower to living a healthier life. In yoga this is called "satsang" translated as "the gathering of like-minded souls."*

*There are numerous beginning yoga classes available. You will only know if one is right for you by trying one. For starters, check your local park district or junior college. I teach at the College of DuPage, in Glen Ellyn. New classes start there in January.*

*Consider finding a class as close to home or work as possible, to reduce the added stress of a long drive. Find a massage therapist in your area by calling your local massage school or the American Massage Therapy Association in Evanston.*

*You are right, Mary. It is no coincidence when two people meet. Thank you for reaching out to me. Thank you for all the healing you have done and continue to do ...*

*Until we meet again, wishing you, and all we have met or yet to meet, a blessed holiday season,  
Joan*

*Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her Yoyoga Website at [www.yoyoga.com](http://www.yoyoga.com)*