

Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



HOME ARTS

Dear Joan:

If you haven't already seen it, the HomeArts website has a Food section. There are several "articles" on healthy eating, revamping recipes, etc. Right now, in the Making it Healthy section, Tamara's featuring a fettuccine with spinach tomato cream sauce, a perfect alternative to fettuccine alfredo, and vegetarian to boot! You may want to check it out for suggestions on your web page.

I'm fairly certain it's www.homearts.com. It's a very deep website; the cooking and eating section is only part of it. In fact, I first got turned on to yoga there.

I just recently bought the Yoga for Idiots book and am thoroughly enjoying it. While I'm not ready to make the jump to total vegetarianism (and maybe I never will be), I'm looking for ways to cut back on my meat consumption. The HomeArts website has given me lots of ideas, and I thought I'd pass the info along.

Thanks!

Ellen Davis Barski

Atlanta, Georgia. One of the few remaining "born and bred" Atlantans here!

Dear Ellen,

Thank you for the great tip! I will check it out.



**Namaste,
Joan**

"A FEW OF MY FAVORITES: PART 1"

Hi Joan,

I just wanted to run down a list of some of my favorites from your book so far. They'll be more to come-----

From "The Complete Idiot's Guide to YOGA" by Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson

PART I

"The increased energy and vitality you receive from regular yoga practice will make you feel as if hours have been added to your day." p. 9

"Yoga sets you free..." p. 10

"This might surprise the Western athlete even more: Strength is compounded when the body, mind, and spirit are exercised together. Strength will mean more to you, once you've practiced yoga, than it did before." p. 17

". . . while weight training builds bone, muscle mass, and strength, yoga will lengthen the muscles and keep them flexible." p. 19-20

"Yoga is a process. Your body and your mind need to learn new habits and a new way to communicate with each other." p. 20

"Genetics only reveal the make and model of your body. What you do with that body and that mind and how you care for them can be as powerful as your genes." p. 27

"Moderation is the wisest, most peace-inspiring course. Nothing should be so important that it must be had in excess, and nothing should be so important that it must be utterly denied." p. 29

"Yoga is open to all religions and encourages the study of all religious and spiritual texts. Yoga is not biased, prejudiced, or exclusive. You needn't be a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew, but you may be any of these. Whatever religion you practice, yoga will help you understand your beliefs more clearly and get you in closer touch with your spiritual side." p. 46

"We are seeking the spiritual with new vigor as an answer to a world we can't control." p. 52

"Non-violent words are also important. Non-violent speech means refraining from words that slander, degrade, or hurt another person. A good rule of thumb is to "honey-coat" your words because you may have to eat them later!" p. 54

". . . greed creeps into our lives through language. Think before you speak, and consider how your words will sound and what effect they will have. Practice listening and being truly present in a conversation, absorbing everything other people are saying." p. 57

"Just say the word "santosha" invokes a feeling of calm." p. 58

". . . discipline isn't deprivation, it's self care." p. 59

"What our brain perceives, our breath mirrors and our body experiences." p. 68

"Prana flows into the body via the breath, so controlling the breath controls the flow of prana." p. 73

I JUST LOVE 'EM.
You're in my thoughts.

Love,
Jack Pantaleo
San Francisco, California

Dear Jack,

What goes around comes around...and I love you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Yo Joan



Dear YOYOGA READERS,

I am starting a new feature section on the YOYOGA site where I will review yoga books and tapes that are fully produced and currently on the market. I will be printing my reviews in upcoming editions of this website. If you have produced a yoga book or tape and would like it reviewed by me on this site, please mail a copy of your material to me, Joan Budilovsky, at: yojoan@yoyoga.com. Your book or tape will be returned only if it is not reviewed. I am looking forward to your beautiful work.



Namaste,
Joan

Itsy bitsy roomy

Dear Joan:

I am teaching myself yoga and 5 days into it I am really enjoying it. My problem is - I have a tiny, tiny space to work in and am finding it really difficult to do any sort of smooth transitions. Any suggestions?

Thank you,
Angela

Dear Angela,

It's not the quantity of space, but the quality of space that is of utmost importance. Have as little furniture and distractions as possible. Is undo clutter cleared from your tiny, tiny space? Keep the room clean, and pet and pest free. As you are probably discovering, many of the hatha yoga postures require a space that is only slightly larger than the length of your body. As you continue opening your body, you will find that the space around you will joyously begin to open more too.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sun, Moon, and all that jazz...

Dear Joan,

You are incredible! A jazz musician that has an interest in healthy cooking and the healing arts. You are really fascinating! I love your witty and informative writing style, It keeps me very entertained while feeding into my very Gemini knowledge seeking sponge brain. I am a Taurus with a Gemini rising and also happen to be a musician. I have just begun teaching yoga (Astanga for 6 months). Although dance, movement the whole aerobics/personal training is my background (10 years). My life has changed so much since practicing yoga, and being able to share yoga with others. I studied at the New England Conservatory of music and am going to incorporate some flute music for the meditation closure in my classes. I hope that it is well recieved and helpful, I would like to give the gift of music to them.

So, now I am so darn curious...what is your sun sign, moon sign and ascendant. I've never met anyone that was a jazz musician and taught yoga. I just want you to know that I use the knowledge from your book in my practice daily. Not only in yoga classes, and day to day life, but your little philosophical yoga tidbits proves useful to anybody who is trying to achieve an abundance in any area of their life. Thank you so much.....

Namaste.

Love,
Shisha
Natick, Ma.

Dear Shisha,

My Sun is in Gemini in my 10th house. My moon is in Pisces in my 8th. And my Ascendant is in Leo. Now you will know me even better! Thank you for your many kind words. A yoga class with flute...beautiful!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Daily Discipline

Dear Joan,

How do you design a daily routine given the many postures available? Also, can you recommend a thorough text which addresses both the spiritual and physical aspects of the tantric way. Thank you for your time!

Steve Kris
New York City, New York

Dear Steve,

I vary my daily hatha yoga depending on what my body and mind are needing

to find a balance. However, as a beginning student, it is important to acquire discipline of practice, and so I would recommend studying two or three postures a week until you have about a dozen to choose from comfortably. Staying with two or three postures a week will build your confidence in these poses and make it easier to move forward and find balance.

Regarding tantric literature, I have not read that much current tantric literature that I would recommend. Perhaps you may want to explore some ancient texts like the "Tantraloka." I often think it is best to go to the source to uncover rich meanings within one's own mind.

Namaste,
Joan

Posture Points

Hi Joan,

I've started my own daily routine 4 times a week but I'm worried that I'm not doin' stuff "right." This morning I didn't get up as soon as I woke up so by the time I got out of bed a million things had already begun to flood and float in my mind but I just wanted to ask some basic questions and I'll list my routine as I go. It takes about 20 minutes. It's still evolving because as I commit it to memory so I sort of also check what feels like natural in moving from one asana to the next.

1. Tadasana- question, I'm unclear about what pulling up from my thighs is so I just find myself trying to plant my feet like a mountain but I'm not sure what the 'act' is.
- 2.the nose to knees forward bend whose Indian name is escaping me. I feel like my head is pulling away from my neck and shoulders. Is that the way it's suppose to feel because it's scary?
- 3.I go to the floor and do the cobra-bhujangasana. Question: should I be squeezing my buttocks to help me arch and lift my back because your book instructs you to press your hips against the floor but I'm wondering is that different from what I'm doing.
- 4.maricyasana-I do the lying down spinal twist. When I first started looking for books, I found one from Rudra press and it instructed you to breath while alternating sides with your legs and I wondered had I misunderstood your instructions to hold the twist and just

breath.

I know this is lengthy but I'd be grateful if you could offer any suggestions. Please have a great day.

Namaste,
Donna Kiel,
New York City, New York

Dear Donna,

1) Tadasana, also called Mountain Pose, is so appropriately named because of the height and strength of a mountain. The quadricep muscles hold the knee caps up, so when you are instructed to lift from the thighs, simply lift the quadriceps up. This may be hard to hold at first, but as you develop it becomes easier. No need to really "act" like a mountain. Simply visualize a mountain and incorporate its majestic beauty within you.

2) The head to knees pose, or Uttanasana, is an excellent pose to understand the hips. If the hips are tight you will use the head and neck to try and move forward. Rather, keep your focus on the hips and try to bend from there. Do not be concerned with how far down you are moving...it is all a simple process. Be patient.

3) In cobra, instead of "squeezing the buttocks, " focus on keeping the back legs strong as you lift to protect the lower back.

4) Regarding the other book you read for instructions on lying down spinal twist, I am not familiar with this book. According to our book's instructions, holding the pose for a period of time or breaths helps the body to relax, open, and become more flexible.

**Namaste,
Joan**



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Dear YOYOGA READERS,

I am starting a new feature section on the YOYOGA site where I will review yoga books and tapes that are fully produced and currently on the market. I will be printing my reviews in upcoming editions of this website. If you have produced a yoga book or tape and would like it reviewed by me on this site, please mail a copy of your material to me, Joan Budilovsky, at: yojoan@yoyoga.com Your book or tape will be returned only if it is not reviewed. I am looking forward to your beautiful work.



Namaste,
Joan

Yoga-holic

Dear Joan:

I am living in Queretaro, Mexico. You are making good labor for the humanity. I encourage you to keep teaching everybody to learn YOGA. Also, here we are making the same as you...I am teaching hatha-yoga on friday from 5:00 to 7:00 am. and practicie the

rest of the week with more yoga-holic. I think you also are a yoga-holic.

Regards,
Luis Alberto Rojas M.
Queretaro, Mexico

Dear Luis,

**I teach moderation in yoga....and try and live yoga. Gee...yogaholic? Tee-hee.
Never thought of that before.**

**Namaste,
Joan**

ROCK ON!

Dear Joan:

Hey J.B.!!! Thanks to you, I'm no longer an idiot when it comes to yoga...not even a lowly stooge! I knew nothing about this practice before I picked up your book; and now I am about to undertake some of the stances for the first time! I am absolutely sure yoga will be a valuable tool in my recovery from alcoholism. Thank you once again, and wish me luck...

J.C.
New York City, New York

Dear J.C.,

Rock on, J.C.! (Not "on the rocks")

**Namaste,
Joan**

QUE ES?

Dear Joan:

This is so appreciated. Let's start with three...the eternal, metaphysical three...
Brahman
Prakrti
and Purusa

These terms are being used in my yoga class.

Yamasti,
Mark
Sarasota, Florida

Dear Mark,

**Brahman means the absolute, or divinity itself. Prakriti means creation.
Purusha means pure spirit.**

**Namaste means honoring and respecting the light within you, within me, and
within all sentient creatures,
Namaste,
Joan**

We got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.□

Dear Joan:

I recently bought your "Complete Idiots..." book and can't wait to get started. I am a 39 year old, full-time program analyst and 4 night a week law school student in the Washington, DC area. My time is very limited, but I do manage a lunchtime swim and want to add Yoga to my day. I am intrigued by the thought of practicing before breakfast, but this is the time of day at which I am least flexible. Is there any advantage (or disadvantage) to practicing yoga when I know my muscles will be tight? I am hopeful that yoga, when practiced in the morning, will help me face my long days with ease and pleasure. I am concerned, however, about increasing the risk of injury. In your book you say that yoga is not a competition, and that one should hover around "the edge." Should this be my guide, or should I practice later in the evening when my body is more relaxed and flexible?

Your book is great, and I think reading through it has convinced my wife to begin searching for a yoga class. Maybe she can teach me a thing or two!

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Andy Jamerson
Springfield, Virginia

Dear Andy,

I start every day with Hatha Yoga. It is a wonderful way to begin the day. Gentle consistent movements or postures to open up the body to face the new day. I find that a stronger work-out in the evening works best for me; after my body has been warmed up through the day and has built up stresses that need to be released before sleeping (I really like getting a good night's sleep so then I can work on my dreams better). I would like to encourage you to embark on your morning practice as you would a child experiencing the dawn for the first time. Your body is sensitive and needs your caring guidance at

this time. Always keeping in mind, whether day or night, the practice of ahimsa/non-violence within your yoga studies. Sure, you can take your body to new heights, or new edges, but always within a context of loving guidance and respect.

I have found that the more hatha yoga I do, the less sleep I need...and my dreams are coming true. Thank you for your kind words, Andy, and best wishes in your developing yoga practice.

Namaste,

Joan

P.S. and I am SURE your wife is a wonderful teacher...you are doing great!!!

HOLD ON!

Dear Joan

I recently purchased The Complete Idiot's Guide to Breaking Bad Habits. Your web site is referenced in this book, and I have a question I'm not sure where to go for answers.

I have started (over and over) Richard Hittelman's 28 day exercise book. While the exercise session purportedly lasts 20-30 minutes, if all the postures are held for the suggested 5-20 counts, the session could last much longer. I know the final runthrough of the day's exercise routine is moved through gracefully as a ballet dancer (I assume without holding the positions), I wonder if the practice session (after introducing the new positions in a kind of warmup) recommends holding the various positions for numerous counts as well.

I hope you can understand this. It's a bit difficult for me to explain. Any suggestions?

Thanks.

Carolyn

Edmond, Oklahoma

Dear Carolyn,

I know of many people who have started (over and over) Richard Hittelman's 28 day exercise book. His warm and witty style has certainly brought many people to yoga. I just got his latest book, which is a joy as well, "Yoga For Health." Do check it out.

Now for your specific question, it looks to me that the beginning practice session in his book, is not held for a series of counts. It is more of a flow from posture to posture. As one moves along in the program, one begins to hold postures for longer counts. This is a wonderful way to approach hatha yoga practice. Slowly building the duration held in poses.

**Namaste,
Joan**

First Impressions

Dear Joan:

Hi, my name is Donna Kiel and I live in New York City. I found your book about three weeks ago and I've finished my first read. I just wanna say for now, IT'S GREAT. I became interested in Yoga at the beginning of last year and had found a couple of books but yours supercedes those by every measure. I think I like most that you seemed to take as much care in instructing the reader to be gentle and thoughtful of her or himself as when instructing the how to's for the asanas. I begin to feel at peace before we got to the first asana. I have some specific questions but I didn't expect to find an email so the questions aren't with me but I'll be in touch and a huge and infinite thank you.

Be safe in yourself,
Donna Kiel
New York City , New York

Dear Donna,

Thank you dearly. The first 4 stages in the study of yoga are:

- 1 - Yamas**
- 2 - Niyamas**
- 3 - Asanas**
- 4 - Pranayama**

Notice how Asanas are at "number 3." First, one needs to explore the way the asanas are approached through the study of the Yamas and Niyamas. Thank you for making this observation, Donna. Eve and I wrote the book with this intention, and it feels mighty good to know that this is how you read it too.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Just one nostril at a time...

Dear Joan:

I am interested in the yoga practice and have a question for you. I was diagnosed with depression approximately 3 years ago and take medication that does not totally wipe it out but keeps everything at an even keel. I still feel tired alot and at times do not have the energy to get out of bed even. Do you know if yoga has benefited anybody with depression? Thank you for your time.

Wendy Wallace
Brazil, Indiana

Dear Wendy,

You are not alone. Yoga has benefited people suffering from depression. It is a holistic approach to health. It works with the body through postures, breath, and diet. It works also with the thought processes through the study of the principles of non-violence, truthfulness, etc. Do check out the Yoga Philosophy section of YOYOGA for more on the philosophy of yoga.

For now, let's start with the breath. Have you noticed how you breathe? Have you ever spent a half hour or more simply focused on your breathing? Yoga consists of numerous pranayama/breathing techniques to help us improve our "prana" or energy. I would highly recommend spending at least 10 minutes a day on one simple technique.

May I suggest alternate nostril breathing for starters? To do this, place your thumb over your right nostril and exhale thru your left nostril. Inhale thru the left, close it with your index finger and exhale thru the right. Inhale right, close it, exhale left.

Continue this process of alternate nostril breathing as long as you possibly can. This begins to balance the energy within. Try this out for a few weeks and then write back to me and let me know how you are doing...

**Namaste,
Joan**

Jane Fonda Reunion

Dear Joan:

Hi Joan! I too, as many of your other letter-writers are, am thoroughly enjoying my "Idiot's Guide to Yoga!" the only thing I ever knew about yoga was the plough stretch because it was at the end of the Jane Fonda workout I did with my mom in the 80s!

Anyway, I saw your book in the bookstore and was extremely compelled to buy it to find some serenity in my life, and have been pleasantly surprised by all the other benefits you "promise" my yoga practice will bring, specifically physical fitness (weight loss) and health

benefits (disease prevention).

My question is very basic, but since I didn't seem to find it in your book, I thought I would write and ask you. Maybe there's not even a right or a wrong way, but better safe than sorry....When inhaling and exhaling, should one or the other be through the nose or the mouth? i.e. - inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth? Or does it not matter?

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and I may have more questions as I progress through your book! (I'm just beginning the poses).

Laura Clemmer
Raleigh, North Carolina.

Dear Laura,

Glad to hear you are enjoying the book! The reason the breath in yoga pranayama techniques is usually breathed through the nose is to extend its length. The longer the breath, the longer the life. It is also cleaner to breathe through the nose as compared to the mouth.

Looking forward to more of your wonderful questions! (And I used to work out with Jane too!)

**Namaste,
Joan**

P.S. My "Sun-Salutations" tape that is available through the Yoyoga Bookstore has subtle traces of Jane Fonda's influence in it. Do check it out.

First time yoga

Dear Joan:

My name is Mariska, and I'm a college student. I always suffer from stiff shoulders/neck, lack of stamina, and sometimes I can't control my energy (sometimes I feel like jumping around, sometimes like lying in bed all day). My friend said that yoga might help, but without an appropriate and good guru, it might be harmful. Is that true? Can I learn yoga from a book? I can't afford a private yoga guru, neither attend a university yoga class.

Thanks a lot in advance !!

Sincerely,
Mariska Audriani
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Mariska,

Hatha Yoga is the study of how the body can release and control energy. The study of this will help you to better control the energy shifts you are feeling, and eventually to find the shifts not as severe. Finding a "good guru" is not the only way to study yoga. In fact, many people (myself included) have found "good teachers" to be a wonderful way to embark on this journey of self-discovery.

May I suggest looking in your local phone book under "yoga" for starters. Then call the local YMCA or gym or health club. Does your college offer any credit or non-credit classes in yoga? If not, suggest it to the administration. Junior colleges are often quite affordable too. There are many fantastic teachers out there looking for interested students like yourself. Best wishes in your collegiate studies, Mariska!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Just do....yoga!

Dear Joan:

I have been enjoying your book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga". I have added a link to your website on the links page of my yoga website [just do...yoga!](#)

Diane

Dear Diane,

Thank you, Diane. And what a great site you have! Yoyoga Readers...check it out!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Link up?

Dear Joan:

I have created a site for people who work at computers for many hours and would like to do some yoga while they are at their desks. See: www.will-harris.com/yoga

Thanks,
Ellen Serber

Dear Ellen,

Thank you for, and from, the work-force...Bravo!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Do you have a question for Joan?

Send your questions or mail to yojoan@yoyoga.com

Please include the city and state you are from.

Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.

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Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: yojoan@yoyoga.com

Yoyoga will be updated on the 1st and 15th of every month.

This site is best when viewed with Netscape or Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



Hey Teach'!

Dear Joan,

I'm interested in pursuing a teacher's training program. Is it offered through the College of Dupage?

Also, just want to let you know that your "Idiot's" book is one of the best, most comprehensive books I've read on yoga. Thank you for putting the most spiritual of ideas into layman's terms. We Westerns need that kind of levity.

I appreciate your help.

Namaste,
Nancy Gerstein
Morton Grove, IL



Dear Nancy,

And I appreciate your input! The College of DuPage does not offer a teacher's training program, but I would highly encourage you to register for my upcoming Hatha Yoga classes as a prelude to your training program that will most likely begin in the Fall. In it, we cover the basic philosophy of yoga as well as the basic postures. The students share in discussions on the philosophy, as well as a study of the postures.

In the Chicago area, there are 3 places that offer a training program that I know of. The "Temple of Kriya Yoga" in Chicago, "Yoga Circle" in Chicago, and the "Himalayan Institute" in Glenview. Best wishes in your yoga studies, Nancy!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yummy Yummy Tummy

Dear Joan:

Hi Joan! I have been reading your "Yoga for Complete Idiots" book, and it is already making some positive changes in my life - yay! However, I do have one question, when doing the cleansing poses and you say to "churn" the abdominal muscles, I'm not clear on exactly how to do that. I end up extending and retracting my stomach - is that right? Many thanks to you!

Namaste,
Maryann
Philadelphia, PA

Dear Maryann,

It is important to understand the anatomy of the body. Yoga helps us to do this on a sensual level. By this I mean, that we begin to be able to clearly sense our muscles and our organs. Thus, we begin to understand their workings more specifically.

If you lean forward and tighten your abdominal muscles, you will feel a band of muscles (the rectus abdominus). As you become more aware of this muscle grouping, you will be able to control it and bring it slightly over to one side and then the other - this is the churning that is referred to in the book. Moving this muscle around helps to activate the intestinal muscles as well as the stomach. Moving these organs helps in digestion and elimination. It is simply a matter of increasing awareness and then control.....you can do it. Be patient. No need to rush....everything happens in do time.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Bandha landa

Dear Joan,

I have been enjoying your book The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. It is extremely well written. I have been practicing and loving Ashtanga Yoga for six months. My study has consisted of formal class instruction and viewing Richard Freeman's video. Despite my participation in class, the video and reading material, I continue

to have difficulty with the full concept of the Bandhas. I was hoping that you might provide me with some ways to conceptualize and feel the Bandhas, specifically the Mulabandha and Uddiyana Bandha. I'm able to contract and lift the perineal muscles but the rest of the concept eludes me. Help!

Thank you,

Steve McNamara
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Steve,

Bandhas are important to understand once one begins to see the connection of the hatha yoga postures and the movement of energy or prana. I do not usually begin addressing Bandhas until my Hatha Yoga 3 Class. By then, students are beginning to feel comfortable in the basic poses and have a strong basis in non-violence and the principles of yoga study.

Bandha is translated as "lock" (I tend to see it as a lift). Mula bandha is the root lock located near the perineum or anus. By contracting or lifting this area it increases concentration and focus. For example, try Warrior Pose. After you are in this pose for a few seconds, apply Mula Bandha, and notice how your energy shifts - your awareness heightens. Applying the bandhas also increases the heat in the body - thus helping ultimately to burn away impurities. I joke with my students and say that this gives new meaning to "anal retentiveness!"

Uddiyana bandha is located higher in the Mars chakra or solar plexus. It translates as "to fly up." Applying this bandha, one draws the navel in and up. Once one applies the Mula bandha, one goes next to the Uddiyana bandha to continue the movement of prana upward. This further heats the body. It also helps to strengthen the movement of the diaphragm muscle.

So, if the bandhas are looked at physically, applying them helps our concentration and warms the body. If the bandhas are looked at esoterically, they lift our energy, burn away impurities, and ultimately lead to self-realization.

Hope this fuller explanation helps, Steve!

**Namaste,
Joan**

User-Friendly attracts Friendly-User

Dear Joan,

I just finished reading the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" and really thought you did a good job producing a user-friendly book! I will suggest it to my fellow yoga students here at the Newport News, Virginia YMCA. It

was nice to see so many new postures, along with the old favorites. Also, I'll be checking out this nice web site often.

Bonnie Baffer
Newport News, Virginia

Dear Bonnie,

Many shantis to you and the NewPort News Y!

**Namaste,
Joan**

LARGE order

Dear Joan,

Thanks for a great new yoga book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide." I have a yoga studio in Little Rock, Arkansas and would love to have supply for my students. I offer yoga mats, bolsters, props, etc. and have all applicable sales and tax permits/numbers necessary. How can I go about ordering about twenty books for resale? Thanks for you attention to this email, in advance. I've been practicing yoga for 17 years and have read every book I can get my hands on... and I really enjoyed your book! It takes the mystery out of yoga and makes it easy to understand by everyone. Thank you.

Namaste,
Catherine Rodgers
Little Rock, Arkansas

Dear Catherine,

How wonderful! Teresa Reecer at email address: treecer@mcp.com would be happy to help you from MacMillan Publishing. Thank you, Catherine.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Let's Go Sailing'

Dear Joan,

A friend of mine recently advised me of a posture, the Boat, that might activate my menstrual cycle. I am 48 years old and have begun to experience some premenopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and irregular cycles. I have not had a blood cycle for over four months. I have had some one day light bleeding. I currently am using a topical ointment of hormones to also regulate my cycle. Could you give me some more information about this asana?

Elouise
Oakland, California

Dear Elouise,

The boat pose is an excellent pose for the stomach and to activate the Mars Chakra (the chakra of action). Since your menstrual cycle is located in the area of the Jupiter Chakra (that is one chakra below Mars), it is often advisable to study poses that balance the chakra above or below the chakra of concern. So, working with the boat pose may indeed be quite helpful to your concerns. If you are interested in more poses, I would recommend tree pose, butterfly, bridge pose, and of course....Shavasana.

Namaste,
Joan

P.S. You may want to begin referring to "hot flashes" as "power surges"...Yahoo!

Coincidentally Celestial...

Dear Joan,

I believe, as in the Celestine Prophecy, that there are no coincidences. I have been on a personal journey to find inner peace and fulfillment for many years. I worked with a therapist for three years and have found additional knowledge and insight through many pieces of literature. Usually the next piece of the puzzle came to me exactly when I needed it. Recently I spotted your Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga - it literally called out to me and I am so glad it did. Every word strikes some chord with me.

Generally, I am pleased with the strength of my body - it continues to support me in almost everything I want to do - in fact it sometimes surprises me with its abilities - though as I grow older I find the pain and resultant recovery time to be more and longer. Also, I have struggled with weight for as long as I have memories. I have found a satisfying way to approach food through Barry Sears' Zone Diet and when I follow it find that I am able to loose weight. My struggle now is to find a way to add exercise back into my life with less of the pain that is now associated with it. I used to be quite fit - I did a triathlon (not iron man) in less than 3 hours, 10 years ago, but since being a consultant I have become more and more sedentary, spending 2-3 out of 5 work nights on the road and in hotels.

Might yoga help me deal with my muscle and joint pain, enabling me to add other types of aerobic workouts to my schedule? I think part of why I no longer exercise much is that even brisk walking leaves me stiff with knee and hip pain for the rest of the day. If so, where might I find a good beginning class or instructor? I live in downtown Chicago and belong to the East Bank Club - though I never go.

Thank you in advance for your help and for writing The Idiot's Guide!!

Ellen
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Ellen,

Great that you want to get back into yoga! Yoga is EXCELLENT for knee and joint problems. The important thing to remember is to take poses gradually and not to over stretch. Unlike running or aerobics, yoga takes strain off the joints when the practice is firmly grounded in ahimsa (non-violence).

I do believe the East Bank Club in Chicago offers yoga classes? If not, there are numerous yoga studios in the Chicago area. Just look in the yellow pages and start calling. If the first class you go to does not appeal to you, check out another class until you find the right fit. In the section, About Joan, I have a list of places where I teach and you are welcome to take some classes with me. However, it sounds like it might be quite a drive for you to get out here. There is probably a wonderful yoga class right around the corner and within walking distance from you! Best wishes on your yoga journey, Ellen.

**Namaste,
Joan**

P.S. Have you thought of adding 'massage' to your healing practices too?

Taking a breather...

Dear Joan,

Thanks so much for your warm response and great to see the Warrior asana in Asana For The Week very apt at this point of the evolution (and one I can actually do smoothly). It's good to know this avenue of synthesis is finding its way into formal education. Through Aileen we find ourselves more actively engaged with the public school system, regular and special ed, and see, in time, the introduction of yoga and other such disciplines as integral parts of the elementary curriculum.

It's also so gratifying to see your mention of the research of Otto Warburg. Although a Nobel laureate his work has been largely overlooked by mainstream medical practice. His presentation on the relationship of oxygen to cancer, "Prime Cause and Prevention of Cancer", 1966, is supporting documentation in the medical protocol for an advanced regenerative therapy which we published in 1992 via the first citizen initiated Institutional Review Board (the means designated by Congress to introduce a new medicine to the public), somewhat taking the tiger by the tail. As ever, time is a great factor in uncovering knowledge and perseverance

as well.

"The Little Yogi Energy Book" is an ongoing pleasure, giving me something new to aspire for and a redoubled appreciation for patience, a recently acquired taste. If your work or play brings you to the littlest Great Lake, you have an open invitation to our little slice of heaven.

Sincerely,
Caroline Grey Ganz
Rochester, New York

Dear Caroline,

Thank you so much. I hope my travels will take me to "our little slice of heaven" someday. Your input is most appreciated...and invitation most kind!

**Namaste,
Joan**

The Wellness House

Dear Joan,

Greetings, I'd first like to congratulate you on your work in the Idiots Yoga Guide. It's funny, great, and easy reading. I grabbed an autographed copy at the, ummm....I forget where Barnes and Nobles. Rinku, the friend I was visiting (I'm from NH) informed me that you were teaching classes at the Wellness House. This is just a hello, since we have a mutual friend, and a thanks for putting together a great book!

In peace,
Mike

Dear Mike,

You are most welcome! I do teach regular classes at the Wellness House in Hinsdale, Illinois. Hope you and Rinku can come by sometime!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Joan,

I am just beginning my investigation and experimentation with yoga. I have your "Idiot's..." book and am learning much. I learn best when I see and experience, so I am searching for a class. I also have experienced my first massage at the age of 46 and loved it. I would like to investigate that field as a second or future career. I read your bio. and was impressed with your background in both yoga and massage. If you have any advice for a middle age beginner, please write back. Thanks. Again- love the book.

Judy Dewey
Texas

Dear Judy,

It is best to learn yoga through a teacher and direct contact. So I do encourage you to continue your search. And as far as a second career in massage...fabulous! The world surely needs more massage therapists. I am convinced that if everyone got regular massages we would have a world of peace. There are many different types of massage - some are more physically demanding to give than others. The point is, massage is a career that can carry you through a lifetime - any age. SO, my encouragements are with you - yoga is the internal massage, massage therapy is the external - together they form a beautiful union.

**Namaste,
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail to joan@yoyoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

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Lions, and Tigers, and.....ZEBRAS! OH MY!!

Dear Joan,

I've run into a small problem on my way to spiritual enlightenment, so I hope you can help me..

I'm an aggressive, raw meat kinda guy and this mellow-yellow, sprouts and croissant yoga is just not working. For example, when I practice the lion pose, my thoughts drift to stalking a zebra and eating it's intestines... Another thing, this non-violence mantra, its a nice theory but I've found many people who need the be-gesus slapped out of them.. You may think I should give up yoga, but no, yoga is very important to me (the chicks dig spiritual guys).

Bottomline; Isn't there a half hearted, watered down version of yoga out there? Say a "no holds barred, kicking A" yoga?

I look forward to hearing from you...

Shasta (or is it Pepsi)
Chuck
Rockford, IL

P.S. Thanks for autographing my "Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga". I didn't realize you were also the model featured in the poses.. I enjoyed your inscription in that you "wrote the book especially for me". It made me feel kinda special...



Dear Chuck,

It takes tremendous strength to conquer inner turmoil in the quest for inner peace. Eating the raw intestines of zebras does not sound too peaceful. So, my following suggestion is especially for you, Chuck. You might really enjoy an Ashtanga form of hatha yoga. It is quite challenging. I invite you to come as my guest to one of my Friday morning classes at College of DuPage (Rockford is not that far away). This class is Ashtanga based. After two hours with me in this class, you may begin to feel more like a zebra than a lion. I will also be starting a new Ashtanga class soon at a new Downers Grove Location. Specifics will be posted in the upcoming issue of Yoyoga. I list all my classes in the About Joan section of this website. Your letter inspires me to call this class "Kickin' A' ('A' for Ashtanga) Yoga " Keep in touch....gently please.

Shasta or Pepsi, it's all cola to me! Thanks for a real kick of a letter.

Namaste,
Joan

Solo is Groovy

Dear Joan:

Your book, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, led me to practice yoga. Unfortunately I can't find any Yoga class nearby, and also I have a very busy schedule. My concern is how harmful if I have some incorrect pose on my own, or if I still can get some benefit from those stretches?

Thanks!
Limin
Pullman, Washington

Dear Limin,

Of course you can get benefit from practicing the postures on your own. However, notice in the book, we do not get to the postures until the middle of the book. The basic philosophy of yoga covered in the beginning of the book is important to understand in approaching the postures. Non competition, non-violence, non-greed, etc. I highly encourage you to read these early chapters of the book before beginning the postures so that you will approach them in a way that is healthy and best for you.

Namaste,
Joan

The Sequel!

Dear Joan,

A FEW OF MY FAVORITES, PART II
From "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga"
by Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson

"Hatha Yoga is a yoga system that emphasizes the physical as a means to self-actualization . . ." p. 75!

"Self-awareness is . . . looking in the mirror and seeing beyond your reflection." p. 76

"Fitness is important in Hatha Yoga, but it means more than cut shoulders and washboard abs. Total fitness--of the mind, body, and spirit--is a far cry from body obsession." p. 77

"Your body isn't all of you. In fact, your body is just one tiny part of you. You are the entire universe." p. 78

"Prana is vitality. Mastering prana, both physical and mental, is probably the single most important aspect of Hatha Yoga. Prana powers the universe with its energy, and it's the profound connection between you and everything else." p. 83

"Cleanliness is next to enlightenment." p. 83

"Yoga is about fitness for and knowledge of your whole self, not just your body." p. 89

"Feel the silence." p. 92

There's Part II. All my love and blessings for the wisdom you have imparted to the world.

Namaste.

Jack Pantaleo,
San Francisco, California

Dear Jack,

Wow! You are quite the reader and writer! Thank you for picking out your favorites from the book. You are a special friend alright. And I am deeply touched (I realize that statement can be taken a few ways). Much love.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Friendly Texan writes...

Dear Joan,

I am interested in becoming a teacher of yoga. I consider myself a yogi and have always incorporated the yoga thinking in my lifestyle. After reading many books, including yours, I believe that I could establish a wonderful class for all levels of yoga. I am currently seeking some advice on how to get started to becoming a teacher of yoga. What would you suggest?? Also, I am in the Fort-Worth area of Texas and I wonder if you ever get out this way??

Thank you,
Robin Ann
Fort-Worth, Texas

Dear Robin Ann,

I am not familiar with Teacher Training programs in your area. Go to your local Barnes and Noble or Borders Bookstore and pick up a copy of the magazine "Yoga Journal" or "Yoga International." In the back of the magazine there are usually ads for various training programs. You may find one near you. Or, ask a local yoga teacher where she got her training. I would suggest going to this teacher's class first to see if their style of teaching is how you would like to teach. Keep in touch and let me know how you are doing.

I have never been to your beautiful state of Texas, but I hope to one day soon!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Freudian Iyengar

Dear Joan,

I have seen your book, Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, at a local bookstore and was impressed. I didn't purchase it then because I wondered what style of yoga you practice. I have been taking classes in the Iyengar tradition locally while studying the texts by Desikachar on viniyoga. What is your style of yoga, if you have one, and what is your view on those different schools in yoga?

I am a Psychologist and live just outside of Washington D.C. where I take group yoga lessons from Iyengar-certified instructors. Personal experience with yoga has already influenced my work as a therapist. It amuses me at times to speculate that Iyengar may be comparable to Freud, quite authoritative yet rigid and dogmatic in his approach, while Krishnamacharya resembles more the late Milton Erickson, a psychiatrist and hypnotherapist who emphasized individualized approach to patients.

Do you ever teach outside of Chicago?

Akira Otani
Washington DC

Dear Akira,

In the About Joan section of this website you will find more about my background. I have studied through numerous centers and teachers over the years. Beginning in the late 70's with the Self-Realization Fellowship and the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda and Mahatma Gandhi. I have also studied with the Shivananda Center and the Temple of Kriya Yoga. I continue to take seminars with various teachers of various traditions.

Regarding my views on the various teaching traditions of yoga, I just think it is 'different strokes for different folks.' For example, people with a scientific and detailed approach to study will most likely love Iyengar's ways. Whereas, people with more of an emotional or "feeling" bent to study will probably love the Himalayan Institute's approach. I do not think I have a specific tradition emphasis in my current teaching approach. I have studied with teachers from both of these traditions, and more. I suppose I would say that my roots (Self-Realization and Shivananda) are important in how I teach, but I have grown and continue to grow through the classes and seminars I continue to take. And, of course, I learn a tremendous amount from my students.

I loved your comparisons to the famous psychologists and the yogis. And, yes, I do sometimes teach out of the Chicago area. I have never been to Washington D.C yet. I have another national book coming out in the Fall with Macmillan Publishing (and with the same co-writer, Eve Adamson). Perhaps a national book tour is just around the corner...

Namaste,
Joan

Right-On Retreats

Dear Joan,

I love the "Idiot's" book and the web site!

My wife and I are beginning yogis (is that the correct form of the plural for yogi?) and we've been studying yoga at the Galter Center in Chicago for about six months. We would like to find a yoga retreat, maybe for a weekend, and maybe within driving distance of Chicago. We're open to other possibilities, also, if the retreat is worth it. Any advice?

Many thanks.
Jim Lucas,
Professor of Music, Northeastern Illinois University

Dear Jim,

Wonderful that you teach music at Northeastern. Please keep me posted on your upcoming concerts!

Yogi is the masculine form. Yogini is the feminine. Adding an "s" to either would be plural. For the sake of simplicity, we usually referred to both male and female in the book as "yogis."

I hear there is a wonderful yoga retreat in Wisconsin. Sharon Steffenson, the Editor of Yoga Chicago Newspaper wrote this about it, "Cress Spring Farm, 4035 Ryan Road, Blue Mounds, WI 53517, (608) 767-3931 is a yoga center, bioregional garden, and a beautiful place. Roger Eischens is the resident yoga teacher (Iyengar). " Sounds great to me!

I have been to various yoga retreats around the country. Special to my heart is the Sivananda Yoga Retreat in Grass Valley, California. It is a small farm and beautiful community of yogis. I would highly recommend it. You can either sleep in dorms (male and female are separated - approx. 10 people maximum per room, bunk beds), or you can bring your own tent and you and your wife can sleep together on the beautiful camping grounds there.

Do keep in touch and let me know how your travels go and where they take you...

**Namaste,
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?
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Please include the city and state you are from.
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A Taxing Job

Dear Joan,

I am looking for a yoga class with Joan in the mornings, earlier the better. I live in Bensenville. I am a tax preparer and am working VERY long days and I could use yoga!

Susan H. Daly
Bensenville, Illinois



Dear Susan,

I am starting new classes at College of Dupage this very week. All mornings Mon, Wed, and Fri. thru the PE dept - credit classes. Registration is still going on. Call 630-858-2800. Hope to see you there, Susan! I am also considering starting some VERY early "Sun-Salutations" classes. How does 6:30 to 7:30AM Tues. and Thurs. grab you? It sure does me!

Namaste,
Joan

P.S. And I do teach Sunday mornings in April and May, and Thurs. "lunch-time" yoga classes in May at "Yoga among Friends" in Downers Grove too. Call 630-960-5488 for info.

A Comment on The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga

Dear Joan:

I read a lot of books, mostly fairly serious ones. I did not particularly expect to ENJOY reading your "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga," especially given the awful title and the utilitarian purpose I bought it for. Enjoy it I did, however, more than any book I've read in a long time! You and your co-author, Eve Adamson, did a great job! Congratulations!

Om,m...
Dinyar Lalkaka
Manhattan, New York

Dear Dinyar,

Many thank yous, Dinyar. As you know, yoga is about not judging a book by its cover, so thank you for buying the book and reading what's inside.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yoga and Children

Dear Joan,

Hello. My name is Abby Mumford. I am writing a report for my journalism class. I was wondering what the normal beginning age for the participants of yoga is? Is there any specific reason why it is usually a certain age? Can children do yoga? If they can, are there certain moves that are special for them? Do the certain moves mean different things? And, how long should a person continue yoga, once started, in order to receive the maximum benefits? Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,
Abby Mumford
Flemington, New Jersey

Dear Abby,

Wow! Lots of questions...I will try my best to answer them.

Yoga originated many years ago in a world very different than the one we live in now. The Vedic culture of India thousands of years ago, was much more in tune with nature and lived closely and harmoniously with it. Clean air, organic food, simple living, was the norm. Without material longings and struggles to survive, the ancients turned their attention and exploration into the understanding of deeper states of consciousness. Thusly, developing techniques for deeper states of meditation, aka yoga.

A lifetime of study enabled one to be considered a master - one who not only was an expert of the sanskrit scriptures, but who also had spent a lifetime living and perfecting them. The children of these societies would be sent to a yoga master at about the age of 5 to 7. The children lived with the master, apart from the parents, in what was called an Ashram. The lifestyle was one of simplicity - playing and doing simple chores. They were taught to rise before dawn and as they grew, they were taught simple yoga postures, breathing techniques, mantras, and scriptural studies. In adolescence they partook of a ceremony around vows of celibacy and self-discipline of thought word and deed. After this ceremony, a more intense study of yoga began. The predawn hours were spent in meditation followed by more intense study of postures and breathing. Trataka (gazing) with the dawning sun as the object, was a method of developing concentration. Thus, they entered adulthood with pure body, mind, and spirit.

The world is a different place now. Certainly our diet alone, and the way food is procured lends itself to vast differences in lifestyles. Societies now are very different. If it were possible to live in the same vein as the ancients, certainly I would think it would be a blessing. To start children as early as 5 or 7 with an appreciation of nature by experiencing the body (through yoga postures) as a cat, dog, cobra, etc., would foster a healthy respect and sensitive awareness for the many forms of life. A deeper understanding of the internal world could be fostered by "quiet times" of study or concentration on simple breathing techniques.

Yoga is the study of a lifetime, in essence, many lifetimes. As our world becomes more complicated, the simple lessons the study of yoga can foster within us has the potential of impacting and improving our immediate life. This improving lifestyle, in turn, significantly impacts and improves the life of generations to come.

Namaste,
Joan

The Trilogy

Dear Joan,

A FEW OF MY FAVORITES, PART III
From "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga"
by Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson

"The attitude you 'wear' can hinder your practice." p. 97

". . . what's the most important thing to wear? An open mind! The most perfect yoga outfit won't do you any

good if you aren't mentally prepared." p. 98

"The yoga road has no maximum or minimum speed limit!" p. 100

"The interesting thing about yoga, and one of its distinctly non Western qualities, is that it allows you to work incredibly hard without ever feeling pain, discomfort, or even displeasure of any kind. Yoga should be innately enjoyable because It boosts all of you. A successful yoga workout increases self-esteem, along with fitness and awareness." p. 101

"Yoga should never cause you pain." p. 101

"Therein lies yoga's power--the physical process breaking into the mental process and lifting the whole of you to higher and higher states of awareness." p. 102

Wise Yogi Tells us: "If your down, move around. Feeling great? Meditate!" p. 108

"To really get the most out of yoga, a commitment is in order. . . . Commitment- phobic are you? Don't be! This is a relationship with yourself, so even though you might discover some surprises (What relationship doesn't have a few of those?), this commitment is well worth the effort you put into it." p. 108

"Commitments require a plan, but ideas without a plan rarely amount to anything." p. 109

"Our very lives move to the rhythm of our heartbeat and our breath." p. 112

"Warrior Pose: Didn't you always want to be part yogi and part Conan?" p.131

A good quote touches both the mind and heart. A great quote connects the mind and heart--and sets the soul a dancing! Such are the gems that fill your book. And we are all richer for them.

Namaste, Love, and may we all meet on the dance floor of life!
Jack Pantaleo
San Francisco, California

Dear Jack,

Three times the charm. Many, many, many thank yous, Jack.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hamstring Blues

Dear Joan,

I have become a big fan since reading your "Idiot's Guide to Yoga" It is a very helpful guide through the enormous amount of information available on yoga and the yogic lifestyle. Thank you.

I have a question regarding sun salutations; specifically, bending with hands to the floor. Although the rest of my body is very flexible, I inherited genetically short hamstrings from my father. How do I best compensate and still stretch safely and smoothly when I bend to the floor? Should I just bend my knees, touch the floor, and bend toward my legs as best I can, or should I keep my legs straight and just bend at the waist and go as far as I can? Both feel good, but when I try the technique of bending at the waist, I don't know where to place my hands (since I can't touch the floor), and when I try bending my knees, I lose balance. I would really appreciate your suggestions, as I really enjoy sun salutations, but this step is always disturbing and awkward for me. Thank you!

Deborah Mance
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Dear Deborah,

Bend those knees and bring your hands to the floor for balance. Don't think in terms of touching your toes, think of bringing the chest toward the knees. The bend comes from the hip joint, not from the waist. After you are bent down with hands on floor, look up to help lengthen and flatten the spine...then fold your head in again.

Slowly work with straightening the knees after your hands are on the floor. Do not rush. No need to hurry. We are all built differently. Have fun. Your ability as a yogi is not dependent on touching your toes, or on straight legs. Touching toes does not give someone a kind heart. The process of loving patience and acceptance toward oneself, does. Many shantis on your hatha yoga journey.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Help!

Dear Joan,

I have been hearing about how yoga helps people with their inner peace and mind. I wanted to start doing it, but i'm not sure i know what is involved in doing it. What do you do, and how do you it. I guess these are my biggest questions. If you could respond, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thank You,
Sueann

Dear Sueann,

How about putting one foot in front of the other and get your self to a yoga class for starters. Your question is a tall-order. So, let's start simple. Keep tuning in here at YOYOGA every 2 weeks for your continuing encouragement too. Everything is a process...no need to hurry. Shanti (this is in Sanskrit for "peace").

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yay! Yoga!!

Dear Joan,

I just finished your "Yoga for Idiots" book and just loved it!

I'm in Missoula, Montana. I'm originally from Mar Vista California, but came here by way of Oregon (college) and Idaho. I just love it here. I took a yoga class about 7 years ago after giving birth to my son and have been practicing at home ever since. Every now and then I pick up a new book (yours is really great), I subscribe to Yoga Journal, have a couple of the Patricia Walden/Rodney Yee video tapes and am finding some time to explore the yoga web sites (I appreciate the list in your book). All these resources help keep me going and learning about yoga. (I remember watching Richard Hittleman when I was a child. Yoga really made an impression on me so long ago and has never left me even when I had temporarily forgotten It!)

I always wish I had more time for yoga! I try to do 20 min. in the morning and then some at night. I actually found time to do 1 hour this past Sunday - tada! I use yoga to balance my life - I have a fun but tough job and no other form of exercise ever seemed to help, but yoga. Instead of running/jogging or having to mess with getting into a pool and then getting all dried and dressed afterwards, I find yoga to be perfect because I can take it with me, do a little bit even at work, the clothing for my yoga sessions at home is comfortable and fun, I'm not weather dependent, and I can enjoy my favorite music too - there are so many reasons this is great for me. I think the best reason is that yoga is such a contrast to the rest of my day - it's the moon to the sun - yin and yang. I help people all day, troubleshoot software problems, and do software development work...yoga gives me time to look inward and think about only me. I Love it!

Once again. Thanks for your book. It's perfect for me, and my lifestyle! It's a huge boost for my yoga practice and how I think about yoga. I'm even thinking more about how I eat - maybe I'll be a vegetarian yet!

Namaste,
Lori Erickson
Missoula, Montana

Dear Lori,

Great that your life of yoga is thriving! Keep in touch.

**Namaste,
Joan**

North Shore Yoga

Dear Joan,

I write to you from Great Lakes , Illinois. Let me begin by saying thank you for your wonderful book you wrote with Eve Adamson. I enjoyed it greatly. I have read a number of works on yoga and yours is one that makes yoga very accessible. Please know I have recommended it to others.

I have been doing yoga for years as a warm up for sports and especially for my swimming program. During more recent months, I have discovered a renewed interest and enjoyment in the asanas and breathing! Yoga has helped me to reduce stress and enjoy my work and leisure much more than ever! Your book has helped me progress in my appreciation of the whole philosophy of yoga.

At this point in time, I find myself considering the possibility of a class or a teacher to help me progress even more in my understanding of the asanas and breathing. I enjoy yoga almost every day! In one way or another, I perform some of the asanas and breathing techniques. Through this very interesting medium of e-mail, I should like to request a recommendation of where I might find a class or teacher in the North Chicago/Waukegan area. Despite my many years with yoga, I still feel like a novice or maybe a little bit more than a beginner. Any help you can offer will be very much appreciated

Thank you again for your book and any counsel you might be able to offer.

Sincerely yours,
Steve Linehan
Waukegan, Illinois

Dear Steve,

DO check out a wonderful free yoga newspaper called "YOGA CHICAGO" The phone # is 312-280-9011. It is carried at many bookstores across the city. In the back of the paper are listings of classes from all areas of the city. Two north side area classes I would highly recommend are with Bruce Symonds (who can be reached at yoganova1@aol.com), and Lakeside Yoga Center (phone # 847-866-2818). Keep in touch, Steve, and let me know how your continuing studies are going!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Viva la diferencia!

Dear Joan,

Hi, I am just learning about yoga, I have started a beginners class and then I bought your book. It is well organized and has lots of good, basic information. Thank you too for the listing of web sites on pg 95, which is interesting. Thanks for your contribution to the rest of us beginners.

I am from Oakland, California. There seem to be lots of yoga teachers and studios in various disciplines around here. I am starting on basic Iyengar, inspired by a friend who does 2 hrs of Ashtanga each morning!. Wow. But I am psyched to proceed, and I really like that it is called a "practice" and is very welcoming to beginners in its philosophy, like "observe but do not judge". (So different from competitive sports, or judgmental, doctrinal religion).

Thanks again!
Mark Dukas
Oakland, California

Dear Mark,

Yes, Mark. I consider it quite 'different' too. Even though I have been studying and practicing yoga for a while now, it still feels like Spring.

**Namaste,
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?
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Please include the city and state you are from.
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Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



YIPEE!!

Dear Joan,

I just wanted to say thanks for starting me down the yoga path! Actually, I haven't even physically started. I became interested in it while reading a "beat stress" self-help book that my sister sent me. The author recommended yoga without actually describing it. Of course, I got visions of physical contortions with vague hints of Eastern religions. I went to the web, and the first few sites scared me, since they were heavy-duty, Sanskrit-laden, translation-filled pages. When I came to your page, I finally understood what yoga was all about! I ordered your book a couple of days later.



I'm only starting section 2 but I'm flying through the book so fast that I'll be starting my practice by the end of the week. The only exercise that I've ever been able to stick with has been a simple stretching sequence (basic stuff) in the mornings. It just makes me feel good - that's why I think the physical and mental aspects of yoga appeal to me. I am 27 and thin, but often sick, and I suffer from chronic (almost daily) migraine and tension headaches among other things. I've lost faith in "Western" medicine for certain ailments. Shortly into your book, I was amazed to notice that my breathing is SO EXTREMELY shallow, especially when relaxed (like reading or web-surfing) that I sometimes don't breathe for several seconds and it doesn't seem to matter! It's so ridiculous that I can't believe I'm even alive! Now, whenever I think of it, I try to change my breathing so that I can get into the habit of using my body to its full potential. Even though I haven't started any asana or pranayama practice, I can feel differences already! I am sure that if yoga does not cure all of my problems, it is going to help immeasurably.

I can't tell you how excited I am - I feel like you came along and told me a wonderful secret! Even before beginning practice, I am starting to feel like a yogini. I have even been able to spend two weeks at work without any major crises, despite the chaos around me - I finally realize that it's a matter of MY viewpoint! I know you have changed my life. Thank you so much - I can't wait to really dive in!

Oh yeah - here's one you may have heard before:

Q. What did Joan B. say to the hot dog vendor?

A. Make me one with everything!

Shanti,
Diane North
Akron, Ohio

Dear Diane,

Eve Adamson, my co-writer, was a great part of the writing of this work too (we are currently working on another book together that will be out nationally this Fall). Your letter really made me smile. It's heartfelt enthusiasm is truly appreciated. Now, about that hot dog vendor, great joke, but how about a tofu dog instead?

Thanks again,

**Namaste,
Joan**

Slow inhale....

Dear Joan,

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga gave me a great overview of yoga as a beginner. It has inspired me to learn more and use what I have learned to make myself a centered, fit person. Thanks! My question; As a professional actor and singer, I have developed many habits over the past twenty-five years. (Most of them GOOD habits!) One habit I have is the ability to inhale a large breath very quickly, say between phrases in a song, and make my exhalation last many seconds to finish the phrase. I am having a hard time overriding my instinct and making my inhale slow-paced and relaxed. Any suggestions you have would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Namaste,
Kelly Wells
Orlando, FL

Dear Kelly,

How is your posture as you inhale? Is your chest fully open, your chin in line with the floor, are your thighs pulling up? Your arms loose by your side? Practice Tadasana, in fact,

try practicing it for a full half hour. What comes up when you do this? What is hard to maintain? What is easy to let go?

Many people have a hard time slowly inhaling. Many people have a hard time slowing down in life, period! When you sing, the breath is inhaled through the mouth. This makes the breathing quick. When you are not singing, practice pranayama through the nose. This slows the breath down and is cleaner for the body as well.

Hope these suggestions you find helpful, Kelly!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Breathworks

Dear Joan,

Hi, Joan. I'm one of your early Friday morning acolytes, Eileen Ward. Thanks for your work on Friday. It was a good introduction, gently done. When I left class to go to the Bookstore to buy the texts, I noticed your cassettes, and I bought BREATHWORKS! since I suspect that breathing is seminal to the yoga process.

I noticed that one side of the tape is marked "Prana" and the other is marked "Yama." Both sides, however, have precisely the same spoken text in your voice. I wonder if this was intended. In my total ignorance of Yoga, I don't have the impression that Prana and Yama are the same concepts. It appears that the duplicated text is the one related to Prana.

I look forward to our continuing sessions.

Eileen Ward
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Dear Eileen,

And I look forward to them too, Eileen! Both sides are the same on the Breathworks tape. I meant to divide it up per side, but thought last minute that it might be easier for the listener to listen to it in one sitting. The next order of tapes, I will divide into two sides...and then pranayama will be more easily understood. Prana is the life force, and Yama are Restraints.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Mark Dukas
Oakland, California

Dear Mark,

Yes, Mark. I consider it quite 'different' too. Even though I have been studying and practicing yoga for a while now, it still feels like Spring.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

Dear Joan,

Thank you very much for your advise. I've called "The Yoga among friends" Institute and they faxed me all the information. Today I tried the first lesson with Jane and I liked it a lot. I bought your book too and I'm enjoying the reading. It's really wonderful. Joan, I'm leaving Chicago next week, so I won't be able to come to your class any more this spring, but I'll be back in September. Thank you one more time for everything you taught me and for opening my eyes to different world. I hope I'll see you again in the fall.

Have a wonderful summer!!!
Monika Sykorova

Dear Monika:

Love and blessings to you on your journey.

Namaste, Joan

**Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail to joan@vovoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



Grant me Patience...but Hurry!

Dear Joan,

I sent you an email last December when I was eagerly wanted to start my yoga. I wasn't too patient to wait for your reply so I bought your book *The Complete Idiot's Guide for Yoga*. Ever since I've read the book, I never skip my yoga practice every Tue, Thurs. and Sat morning. However, I am having a lot of trouble warming myself up, (I do my practice around 7.00 in the morning) especially for those back bending postures. Do you have any suggestion for warming up? I don't have much time in the morning so I usually skip the warming up...



Sincerely,
Mariska Audriani
Wisconsin

Dear Mariska,

My suggestion is to NOT skip the warming up. If the postures are done slowly and with awareness, this is a warm up. If the postures are done quickly and without awareness, then no matter how "well" you think you are doing, you are not doing yoga.

This past week, I taught a yoga seminar at a retreat center for about 40 people. After the class was over, I was asked to demonstrate a headstand. I obliged, and also did a bound lotus headstand while I was "up there." People applauded. It was fun. I thanked them and reminded them too that my demonstration was not necessarily a reflection of my "yoga abilities." It was a reflection of my being able to remain calm under pressure (there is some yoga there). However, whether or not my body can go up into a headstand does not

necessitate a yogi. Yoga is an internal process, a study of energy - balanced, non-competitive. And Mariska, it is not rushed.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A future in Law

Dear Joan,

Thanks for the heads up. I enjoy reading the Yoyoga webpage, and your notices get me there quickly. I am beginning to fit in a few yoga poses toward the end of the workday, and it is amazing the difference it makes in my comfort level during night law school classes. A little bit goes a long way!

Andy Jamerson

Dear Andy,

You are welcome. Glad to hear you are studying law - It sure would be great to see some Yogi Lawyers out there!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Light Bulb!

Dear Joan,

I think that "Yoga Tips" and "Ask Joan" sections can be archived after each issue and may be presented under a separate "Yoyoga Archive" section on the Yoyoga Page. (You may consider asking Kathie if she has saved all the previous issues of "Ask Joan" and "Yoga tips"). I think this will be a very valuable resource for your readers. The range of question asked by your visitors (readers) gives a very rich texture and will be very valuable to both a beginner and the relatively experienced on the Yoga Path.

Kamal Kishore
City (district) : Klong Luang
Province: Pathumthani
Country: Thailand

Dear Kamal,

That is a great idea, Kamal! I have just been so busy writing...I don't even know how to "download!" I will run this by my Web Site Designer: Kathie Huddleston - kat@orbitel.com She will be so happy to hear of yet another way to expand this YOYOGA site! So beautiful too to be hearing from you all the way from Thailand. So far, and yet so very, very close. Thank you for your kindnesses,

**Namaste,
Joan**

Quintuplets!

Dear Joan,

A FEW OF MY FAVORITES, PART V
From "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga"
by Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson

"Finding yourself through yoga means finding the beautiful, spiritual you and bringing it out for everyone to see. Loving yourself means loving the universe, and loving the universe means loving yourself, because you're one and the same: You're both exquisitely radiant." p. 238

"Rather than shunning your body or feeling it has betrayed you, embrace it, get to know it all over again, and let it work for you, leading you to a higher spiritual plane." p. 246

"Who's the other team? . . . The other team is a surly bunch of characters: self-doubt, negative thoughts, jealousy, hate, violence, illness, pain, and suffering. Formidable opponents! But your team can beat them, and it's up to you to set an example for your team members. Follow yoga's principles, practice the exercises, learn deep breathing, even try meditation. You'll be learning about yourself and learning how to live in the world, too, which is really the same as learning how to be a great team player." p. 250

"When your whole family practices yoga together, the family bond is strengthened. Everyone learns more about the other family members--what they can and can't do, what they like and dislike, how they like to play. Love is built on intimacy like this, and yoga offers the perfect environment to cultivate and nurture family intimacy." p. 253

Namaste,
Jack Pantaleo
San Francisco, California

Dear Jack,

Oh Jack, you are terrific! Thank you over and over again...eternally.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Meet you in St. Louis. Where's that?

Dear Joan,

Do you know anyway other than my home that I could practice yoga in the St. Louis area. I will be visiting there and am looking forward to continuing my yoga movements in a class room enviroment. Any suggestions?

K. Dagers
St. Louis MI

Dear K,

Is MI for Michigan? Because MO is for Missouri. I am confused. Suggestion - pick up a copy of "Yoga International Magazine" They have a directory of classes available for various states. Also, telephone information in the town you will be moving to and ask for "yoga." See what comes up! Happy travels...

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Yo Joan



A kindler and gentler nation...

Dear Joan,

I have been reading letters from others, hoping to find some motivation to get started. I took Yoga classes in the 1960's and enjoyed it thoroughly. I was a yoga proponent. It is now 30 years later, two children later, 60 pounds heavier, and I remember how it felt to have some control over my body. I have tried several times to start yoga again, but I think it would be safe to say that negative thinking wins. Sometimes I think I should start somewhere else--aerobics, faster weight loss plan, stamina building--perhaps anywhere. But all that seems to really serve is to stop any plan at all.



Do you have a word from the wise on getting started and thinking positive about results? I'm also very curious to hear what one single thing serves as a motivator more than anything else. I remember reading somewhere that when Jane Fonda was asked what one single thing helped insure that she would proceed with exercise for the day, she said changing clothes for a workout. Sometimes I have tried that, and I am surprised by how my attitude changes with a change of clothes--sort of makes a statement of purpose.

I enjoy spiritual pursuit, and remember enjoying yoga. Do you have others who have overcome internal and external obstacles who would be willing to share their motivation secrets/wisdom?

Thanks for any help you may have to offer.

Carolyn
Oklahoma

Dear Carolyn,

Look up AHIMSA (Non-violence) In Yoga Philosophy and see how it might fit into your thought patterns...whatever size. Yoga is a lifestyle. It is more than a study of touching toes. It is a study of how the mind can encourage or discourage our physical efforts. Ahimsa is the first principle studied. It is studied on 3 levels : Physical, verbal, and thoughts. Let's look at the thought level for now. How do your thoughts manifest into your actions. Watch your thoughts, and when a negative thought pops in like "I am fat," "I am out of control" "I am not fit," realize that only you have control of these thoughts...and only YOU can change them. Laugh and replace them with more realistic views "I am beautiful," "I am in control," "I am fit." When you look around and see bodies and images that appear as a moving Women's Workout World...laugh again. You are so much more than this. The world is much grander. Then hug yourself, and go to a yoga class. Hope to see you there!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Triplets

Dear Joan,

I recently purchased the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga and cannot wait to get my routine started. I do however, have a question or two.

Firstly, when doing the Sun Salutation, how long should each pose be held? The book says "Keep the movements flowing", but I'm not sure how to interpret that.

Secondly, when doing Ujjayi breathing, should the glottis be closed off during both inhalation AND exhalation, or just inhalation?

Finally, how can I be sure that I am effectively balancing my personal vinyasas? For example, do you need to balance the standing poses?

I would really appreciate any help you can give, because I am anxious to get yoga into my life, but don't want to be turned off by doing something incorrectly.

Thanks,
phorever
Vincent Muller
San Jose, California

Dear Vincent,

First of all, Sun-Salutations can be done with the breath moving in and out with the movements. Inhale arms up, exhale arms down, Inhale one leg back, exhale both legs back and come to ground, inhale up into cobra, exhale into downward dog, inhale one leg up,

exhale both legs up, inhale arms up, exhale back to mountain pose. You may want to stay at a certain pose in the flow and add a breath or two or more. Yoga is a personal practice.

In Ujjayi Breathing, the glottis is closed during both exhale and inhale. The sound should be heard in the back of the throat throughout your ujjayi breathing.

Regarding balance. A general rule of thumb is to balance backbends by doing forward bends (and vice versa). An example on how Standing poses are balanced: Warrior Pose with right leg bent, then alternate pose with left leg bent, or Triangle pose to right then to left. It is important to pause between postures to understand what the body needs to balance. The more time in introspection after and during the poses, the more you will see clearly what your body needs to balance. Yoga is highly personal, as so are our individual balancing needs.

Namaste,
Joan

Profoundly Human

Dear Joan,

In The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, on p. 93 , there's a Wise Yogi Tells Us box containing the six universal laws for being human. They're quite profound. What's their source? I live in Sewell, New Jersey, which is near Philadelphia. Can you recommend any yoga teachers in this area? I practice tai chi, and view yoga as a nice complement to it.

Thanks for responding so quickly,

Howard R.
Sewell, New Jersey

Dear Howard R.,

I am not really sure of the direct source for the six universal laws. I remember an actor saying it to me in NYC in 1986 (or something close to it), he heard it from somewhere else...and so it goes.

Regarding Philadelphia classes, here are a few options to check out:
Self-Mastery Programs (610) 642-5621
SKY Foundation (215)574-9180
Joan White - Iyengar Tradition (215) 386-9228

Namaste,

Joan

One little fishie

Dear Joan,

Don't know if you're a computer junkie like me, but check out <http://www.algy.com/herb> . They've got a great recipe section too. Also, do you have suggestions for us net-heads who engage in shoulder/neck abuse? I like the back bends, especially the fishie pose for between-the-shoulder-blades relief! I'm practicing daily with weekly classes now :)

Thanks & Namaste,
Diane North
Akron, Ohio

Dear Diane,

Thanks for the recipe web site referral. Will check it out !

Three great poses for neck and shoulder tensions are, COW pose, DOWNWARD DOG pose, and CHILD'S pose. I have found backbends to be extremely powerful in opening up the chest, but if the shoulders are tight, full backbends (like full-fish pose) can be down-right uncomfortable to hold (if not impossible). If the shoulders are tight, the arms are not able to respond fully. It takes strong arms to lift into a backbend. When the shoulders are free, the balance becomes easier and backbends become less of an effort. Continual practice of downward dog, cow pose, and child's pose can make the backbend poses less of a "back-aching" experience.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Funny Finale

Dear Joan,

This was forwarded to me by one of my students...

So, you've heard the one about the Zen master who steps up to the hot dog cart and says: "Make me one with everything." Well, here's the rest of the story.

The hot dog guy fixes a hot dog and hands it to the Zen master, who pays with a \$20 bill. The guy puts the bill in the cash drawer and closes the drawer. "Where's my change?" asks the Zen master. The hot dog vendor

responds: "Change must come from within."

Bruce Symonds, Yoga Teacher
Lincolnshire, Illinois

Dear Bruce,

HA! HA! HA! Thanks for the funny finale! Bruce, I am so happy to that you will be subbing for my yoga classes when I am in Canada in 2 weeks. What a treat it would be for my students to have a Bruce Symonds finale to the semester!

Have any readers out there ever been to "Niagara on the Lake" in Ontario? That's where I am headed for a week in June. I hear it is mighty beautiful there!

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Yo Joan



Inherent greatness

Dear Joan,

My name is Deanna and I just found your beautiful, informative web page. You have done so much with your life and in comparison, I feel I have hidden all my creativity, talents, intelligence because of fear. I have panic attacks and now am facing the empty nest. I've only succeeded in one thing, I've been a single mother and brought up four kids who have all managed to go to college. The youngest will attend RI miles away from me and I feel that if I can't change my life 100%, I will physically die. It's like my purpose in living is gone. My whole life has centered on them. Now my reason for living seems to be gone. What do you suggest?



I am going to buy some of your good books. The problems with me are that I don't have enough support; no extended family, it was mostly me and the kids living in poverty but always improving through the years. No money to start a home business, my dream. No loving husband to share life with. Only high school education. I'm now a young looking but very tired 58 year old, I still have a very hard time facing new people, new situations. Will yoga help me? The deep breathing exercises I do and some meditation have helped but I feel I want to bring new people into my life. And how to stop those negative thoughts about the bleak future.

Well, it's like an empty slate now. I'd have to do it on my own as I will be living on a SSI check. Sad to see that I got myself in this situation. I know I could have done better but the fear just stayed with me from a childhood that was fearful. Thanks for listening to this old lady!!! I wish I could find that inner peace or bliss but no matter what I do, it eludes me! And I don't feel strong or brave.

Thanks!
Deanna Demers
Fairhaven, Mass.

Dear Deanna,

Thank you for your letter. I would like to encourage you to seek out a yoga class in your area. If none exist, get a good yoga book, put a little inexpensive ad in a local newspaper or a "yoga group" forming....and you may be surprised at the interest. I realize you may not feel comfortable or qualified to teach, so make it a mutual support group. Grow and learn the poses together. Study the philosophy together too. If you do not want to meet in your home, find a local church, or...it's summertime and you can meet outdoors!

You have done GREAT things in your life, Deanna....and will continue to do so....whether or not you are able to see this...it is so.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Contentment.

Dear Joan,

Before you feel too bad about this am...it was a lovely idea.

● The Arboretum is one of my favorite stops...often on the way to a busy school day at the college. Sometimes I leave to go for a walk during the afternoon, before evening class. Regarding: Contentment. I love the arboretum so much that it was difficult for me to be upset at the mosquitoes for very long. In fact, after our class I grabbed my book and bottle of water and decided to give the park another try to redeem itself. And it did. The mosquitoes went to bed, the breeze picked up, the sun burned off the humid haze, and I enjoyed a peaceful walk around the lake, ending at the picnic table to enjoy my book. The moral of the story...the answer to what is contentment? Well, for me, contentment comes in the knowing of what one really enjoys, and being patient until the time is right to enjoy it. Do you think a real yogi may think in something along those lines? Maybe there's hope for all of us yet!

Thanks for the great morning...and happy birthday. fyi: your neck looked pretty bitten up this morning...a mild vinegar solution in tepid water sponged on the areas might help. You'll enjoy the added feature of smelling like a pickle for a while. See you Wednesday.

Namaste.
Linda Barkoozis
Glen Ellyn, IL

Dear Linda,

Yes, I do think a real yogi would think along those lines...and did.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A thrilling report!

Dear Joan,

What a thrill to open the Wheaton Sun and see the featured article on Yoga, and better yet, to see my instructor, Joan. Congratulations!

Rosanne Chirumbolo
Wheaton, IL

Dear Rosanne,

I did not know about the article till a week after it appeared. The day you wrote me, Roseanne, was the day I found out about it! Thanks for sharing in this joy!

**Namaste,
Joan**

jivamukti?

Dear Joan,

I have been practicing yoga for about 4 years. I started in Oregon with Hatha classes which concentrated on stretching and replenishment. Then I studied with an Iyengar teacher for 2 years, and now I am in a situation - the city I am moving to has two yoga instructors - one is from NY and teaches a very challenging class - she is a Jivamukti instructor ; the other instructor got her certification from Kripalu. They are both excellent in their own way, and I shall learn from both, and then incorporate each type into my own practice - however, I would like a little more information on Jivamukti, and I have found very little - even on the net. If you have any ideas where I could learn more, please advise - I LOVE your site.

Namaste,
Pilar

Dear Pilar,

I honestly do not know what Jivamukti is? Do any readers out there? You can write to me. I got your letter the day I put up the site, Pilar, so I did not have enough time for research.

**amaste,
Joan**

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Web Site Designer: Kathie Huddleston - kat@orbitel.com

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Contending with contentment

Dear Joan,

Hey Yoga-miester, CONTENTMENT IS EVIL!

According to the American Heritage Dictionary;
Content: 1. Not desiring more than what one has; satisfied.
2. Resigned to circumstances.
Contented: Satisfied with things as they are.

Would the world be better today if the United States was 'content' not to end slavery, or 'content' not to enter WW2 thus letting the Jews continue to die in concentration camps?

Unfortunately, I see many Americans 'content' with the way things are; letting TV become their barbiturate, their homes, forts; 'content' to let others deal with the problems of the world; 'content' never to strive, explore or achieve their dreams, because, you can't be 'content' if you are disappointed.

Forget 'content', I would counter with 'CONTEND.'

The American Heritage Dictionary defines; Contend: To strive, to compete;
Contention: A striving to win in competition.

In my opinion there needs to be a lot more 'Contending' going on out there, then 'Contentment.' What is your opinion?

Chuck
Rockford, IL

Dear Chuck,

Great questions! I have struggled with the same concepts you question! In fact, it was hard for me to dedicate myself to yoga studies for years because a part of me felt that if I did, I would become "passive and perhaps even a somewhat starry-eyed weirdo." I keenly saw the problems around me and did not want to become a Pollyana and go around saying how "Everything is beautiful," when I knew dog-gone well a lot (sometimes a seeming majority of it) down-right STUNK!

As I continued in my half-hearted studies, my whole heart began to slowly open. I started to realize that I had more control over my life and my choices than I thought. My negative thinking was a big part of holding me back from my individual progress in life; my progress on an emotional, physical, and spiritual level. I also realized that the company I kept was/is essentially important to supporting my developing yogic lifestyle/world view.

Now, this does not in any way mean that I still don't shiver and get mighty upset by the many injustices this world offers. It does mean that I have a clearer view on how to effectively deal with these injustices. It also means that I can not "Save the world." I don't get as involved in the news media as I used to; I find it overwhelming to read, watch or listen to the constant horrors of the day. I do occasionally tune in to the political climates around so I am not living in a total cave. But my attitude is hardly alarmist, which is an attitude, I believe, much of the news media thrives on. I am more involved in my community and in areas of my life I feel I can have a direct influence on.

Perhaps contentment comes with maturity? Does this mean then, that someday in "my maturity" the status quo will become accepted as perfect? I am not there yet. In fact, I have a long way to go. I am constantly evolving and growing. Just when I think "enlightenment" hits me, a thunderstorm breaks and knocks me off my feet! Someone will say something that riles my emotions, or I will hear of a horrible injustice that I have no control over, or I will experience a friend's betrayal, or I will shout with rage, or I will desire pork chops, or will simply stub my toe.

For me, I know meditation is the key to a deeper understanding of contentment which I continue to explore and experience. Obviously, much of the world 'contends' to disagree with contentment. My world still struggles with fully realizing the yoga concepts of "contentment, non-violence, non-stealing." And, how these concepts can be incorporated into my life in a society that does not fundamentally understand or support them. Chuck, although you may think our world views are very despairing, I think our worlds are more alike than what they may appear to be. In fact, I think they are one. .

Namaste,
Joan

NEWS FLASH! Jivamukti!

Dear Joan,

I am new to the internet process and am using my son's screen name. Actually, he is helping me through this process. According to "Pocket Guide To Hatha Yoga" by Michele Picozzi, "Created in the early 1990's by New Yorkers Sharon Gannon and David Life, Jivamukti is a Sanskrit word that means "liberation while alive

in the body." This system borrows from several styles of yoga, including Ashtanga, Iyengar, and Sivananda. Spiritual teachings are taught in tandem with postures. During class teachers chant in Sanskrit and read and interpret the philosophical teachings of yoga." Hope this helps you out. I really enjoy your book, "Idiots Guide" and am resuming a yoga practice after many years of trying other types of fitness regimens, but now I am so grateful to have come back to yoga. It's producing profound changes in my life already after only a few months. Love your website!!

Namaste,
Geneva Coats,
Chino, Calif.

Dear Geneva,

Quite interesting! Thank you for the education. As noted earlier, I have not been up on the news media lately. As a wonderful character once remarked..."I depend on the kindnesses of strangers." Thank you for your kindnesses (you are really not a stranger, though.:)

**Namaste,
Joan**

Cover Boy!

Dear Joan,

Congratulations on a great yoga book for idiots! I just bought a copy a few days ago and I am enjoying it tremendously. The book strikes a perfect balance between the necessary background, philosophy, lifestyle, diet, and, of course, the basic yoga poses.

I am a yoga novice and my body still thinks that I should have my head examined for doing this, and, although I can't put my feet behind my ears yet, I am already enjoying the transition to the yoga attitude towards life's little challenges.

I am happy to report to you that after only a few days, I have been able to master the pose demonstrated on the front cover of your book. It was not too hard for me for several reasons: my otherwise useless, but considerable knowledge of gravitation waves and anti-matter has proven helpful and, also, my head-to-body weight ratio is somewhat more favorable than that of the gentleman on your book. So, it was a piece of cake for me. (I wonder if you could get me the e-mail address of the dangerously attractive yoga model inside your book? :-)).

Thanks for a very enjoyable book.

Cheers,
Peter Mioduszewski

Clinton,TN

Dear Peter,

Thank you for the encouragement! I am quite impressed that you have mastered that cover yoga pose. The publishers asked me to pose for it, but I could not quite do it as effectively as the picture they chose. Perhaps if a CIG to YOGA 2 comes out, you will be called to demonstrate!

And, as with the most important things in life, you already have the e-mail address for the yoga model in the book.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Location, location, location.

Dear Joan,

Hello! I am a new comer to the whole concept and I received the idiots guide to yoga as a gift. I was excited to learn of your location - I am in the south right now but am moving to chicago in three days!! Would you be able to direct me to a good place to take yoga? I am new to chicago and am very interested in beginning my yoga program right away but am unsure of who to talk to or where to start. Where is the best place for me to go? I would like to tone my muscles, increase flexibility and maintain peace of mind.

Thank you for your help.
Karen
South

Dear Karen

**Check out the College of DuPage Physical Education classes in yoga (new classes start this week!). Or check out this website in the [About Joan](#) section for even more choices.
WELCOME TO CHICAGO!**

**Namaste,
Joan**

One good apple is all it takes...

Dear Joan,

I read your book "Complete Idiots Guide To Yoga" and found it very useful. This book also gave me a very good insight into the yoga lifestyle. I'm very grateful that you wrote this book. In particular the vegetarian advantages were very clearly described in a loving way.

Joan, I am aware that you must be a very busy person. It's possibly better to have no teacher than a bad teacher. I was wondering if you could give me a pointer on how to track down a good teacher in Sacramento, California. I've been doing yoga on my own instruction for a year now and feel that I could benefit from a critics eye.

Thank you Joan.
Jasbinder Singh
Sacramento, California

P.S. Thank you very much for your help. I really appreciate it. Also, I looked in your book and was wondering if there is a way to settle into the lotus position - a given set of exercises to perform in order to reach this position. I can do headstand and many other moves fairly easily now. I have tried for almost a year and am still struggling on the half-lotus!!! I'm sure many other students have this problem too.

Dear Jasbinder

A "critic's eye" may not be the cup of tea needed, but the loving guidance of a teacher may be just the thing! Have you looked up yoga in the yellow pages there? I am sure there are many wonderful teachers out there. The encouragement and support you get from doing yoga with others can be very enlightening in itself. Here are a couple yoga teachers to check out:

**Kriyananda Devi (916) 392-9092
or
Bashiran F. Travis
(916)-443-2639**

Regarding Lotus Pose, open hips are certainly necessary to achieve a sense of peace in this pose. Poses like Tree Pose are helpful to prepare the body for Lotus, as well as One-legged Forward Bends, and Butterfly. Know also, Jasbinder, that Lotus Pose is not for everyone. Never force any pose. When, and if, the time is right, it will happen. In the meantime, keep exploring all poses with a sense of peace and freshness.

Keep in touch, Jasbinder (cool name) and let me know how your classes go!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Cool, man

Dear Joan,

"Yo" Joan, How did you get so damn cool?

Yer pal,
Mark
Evanston, Illinois

Dear Mark,

From my cool pals. Now the question is...which came first? The chicken or the egg? Aka- my cool pals or me?

**Namaste,
Joan**

.AYT

Dear Joan,

Bought your book, Idiot's Guide to Yoga recently and really love the easy to understand in English way that you and Eve explain the yoga philosophy. I have been practicing hatha yoga since 1973 with some breaks when I had no classes nearby to attend.

Started teaching one class about 2 and 1/2 yrs ago when my instructor decided to leave for California. Currently, I am certified as a Sivananda Instructor and teach five classes weekly in Lee County, Florida. I am very interested in learning about The International Association of Yoga Therapists. Please let me know a little about the organization and where to contact them.

In Peace and Light,
Terri Fields, Attunda
Lee County, FLorida

Dear Terri,

This organization has a quarterly Journal publication that can be quite interesting and educational on yoga developments in the field. They used to have regular newsletters, but I

have not received anything from them for a long while. I have not received a quarterly from them for a LONG while too? Liliias Folan is now the President. She has a website out there and you may want to look this organization up that way, or call them at 415- 383-4587. Maybe you can fill me in on what's up with them lately too? Thank you, Terri!

Namaste,
Joan

A Mat and a Tape

Dear Joan,

Hi, Joan: Do you know where one can purchase a yoga mat in these parts. I've tried such places as Sportsmart without success.

Further, on the second side of your "Yoga with Joan" tape you direct bending and straightening the knees alternately while in "downward dog." Do the feet remain on the floor while this alternating goes on? Forgive my teaspoon- measure attempts at progress, but something could be better than nothing. I throw myself on the mercy of your tolerance.

Eileen
Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Dear Eileen

The best place I know to purchase yoga matts here are: The Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago, or Yoga Circle in Chicago, or through mail order via Yoga Journal magazine.

Regarding my directions on the tape, Yes, the toes remain on the ground as you alternate lowering heels to the floor. Hope this helps. My tolerance is most merciful, especially for you, Eileen!

Namaste,
Joan

Shhhhhhhhhavasana

Dear Joan,

just bought the complete idiots guide to yoga..I am interested in trying yoga, and I thought the book would

be a big! I lack energy during the day, to clear my cluttered mind and looking to tone muscles...I am sure that practicing yoga will help me! When is the best time for someone who gets tired midday to practice yoga? And which postures could you suggest... thanks for taking the time with me I am very excited on my new endeavor!

Darlynn
Daytona Beach, FL

DearDarlynn

"Would be a big"... what?

How about a brief shavasana when you are tired? Try respecting the natural rhythms of the body. If you feel you just have to "push" through the lull that our bodies naturally experience mid day, how about some gentle awareness stretches. Slow movements that are done with the breath in full awareness. There are also pranayama exercises stated in the book that can help to build energy midday. Check out the back of the book for even more suggestions too. Thanks, Darlynn! Whew, I need a little shavasana myself about NOW!

**Namaste,
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail to tojoan@yoyoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

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Yoyoga, Inc.

Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact Amazon.com. Thank you all kindly.



Namaste,
Joan

A Feather in your cap?

Dear Joan,

Thank you (and Geneva too) for the low down on Jivamukti yoga. I love your newsletter! By the by I saw on the internet that the two people Geneva mentioned: Sharon Gannon and David Life have a video tape available on Jivamukti. I might get it. I will definitely get your Idiot's Guide - sounds great!

Also have you heard of The Feathered Pipe Foundation in Montana? They have incredible yoga retreats, and I'm planning to go to one with Liliias Folan in July. Let me know what you think - I don't know that much about her - except that she has been in the yoga world for a long time -

THANKS
Pilar

Dear Pilar,

I do not know of the "Feathered Pipe Foundation." Perhaps you can send me some contact information on this organization? I am looking for a meditation retreat in August. Perhaps this may be the place? If any other readers know of great meditation retreats out there in August, do write in and let me know.

Regarding Liliás Folan, I do not know her personally, but I certainly have heard of her wonderful reputation. I am sure you will enjoy your retreat with her. Have a wonderful trip!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Big, bold, and beautiful

Dear Joan,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Julie Deroche, I am a 19-year old student and resident of Darien, Illinois. I recently purchased your Idiots Guide to Yoga, and I thoroughly enjoy your writings and the simplicity with which your asanas are described. I was excited to notice on the back cover that you are an instructor at COD. As you may know, Darien is only about 20-minutes from there!

I took a Hatha Yoga class through the park district last winter, and was not very impressed by it. It was an exceptionally large class and the teacher had trouble including everyone. I am excited to be doing yoga now, using the guides and tips in your book. I have borrowed a few yoga tapes to further aid my study. Perhaps when I become comfortable with the described asanas in your book and feel the need for more personalized instruction, I may have the privilege of taking a class that you teach at COD.

Thank you (and your cowriter!) for writing such an understandable, motivating guide to this intriguing style of life and exercise. I hope to integrate yoga to an important part of my life.

Sincerely,
Julie Deroche
Darien, Illinois

Dear Julie,

And thank YOU for writing me to let me know you like the book. I do hope to see you in class one day soon, Julie! Just to prepare you tho, classes at COD can also be quite large. I try my best to include everyone, but I do sometimes feel overwhelmed by the number of students and must trust that students are following their inner wisdom too. Teaching large classes is usually quite challenging for most teachers of one-on-one disciplines. Luckily, yoga is largely an internal study. I often encourage students to close their eyes...and so do I. And then, usually, we all can breathe a little bit easier.~)

Namaste,
Joan

BREATHE

Dear Joan,

I just bought your book yesterday, "Idiot's Guide to Yoga." In fact, quite by accident. I was not quite sure what I was looking for, but I knew I needed something to help bring me back to life. I am very excited about approaching the yoga lifestyle, yet am also very worried about my health. I am naturally very tall and thin, 5'10" @ 126lbs, I am very weak in body and mind and even though your book is wonderfully encouraging and informative I still find myself filling up with anxieties about starting something new. Any suggestions?

Natasha
Peterborough, Ontario Canada

Dear Natasha,

Breathe deep. Breathe deep. Breathe DEEPER.

Those are my suggestions. Find a yoga class that puts a strong emphasis on the breathing. I used to teach classes just in breathing. Your letter has inspired me to start them again. I wish you lived closer. I will be starting new "Breath" classes in the Fall. Perhaps you can encourage a local yoga teacher to start some "breath" classes over in Canada? I just got back from spending a week there in the beautiful town of "Niagara on the Lake." The air is mighty nice up there too!

Namaste,
Joan



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A Sturdy Woman

Dear Joan,

I just wanted to thank you for your website. I am a beginner and it's been rather difficult to find information/positions that don't look like pretzels, specially as a "sturdy" woman. I also am trying, as I know we all are, to ..nprove my diet, and greatly enjoy your recipes. Your site is so comprehensive, I just wanted to let you know how much it's appreciated.

Sincerely,
Melissa Reed
Twin Lakes, Wisconsin



Dear Melissa

And I so appreciate your encouraging feed back too!

Hail Mail

Dear Joan,

I am interested in getting a schedule of your classes. Would you either email or snail mail me one? Thank you.

Angela Mitchell
Oak Park, Illinois

Dear Angela,

My current class schedule is listed in theAbout Joan section of this website. Hope to see you there!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Self Magazine

Dear Joan,

Did you see the nice little blurb about your yoga for idiots in Self magazine Saw it in a waiting room. Congratulations and thanks

Anne

Dear Anne,

Yes Anne! Just saw it a few days ago. The August issues lists CIG to Yoga as one of Self's top ten book pics on yoga! So let's all give our "Self" a hand!

**Namaste,
Joan**

What's where Doc?

Dear Joan,

I happened upon your web site a couple of days ago while researching yoga book titles at Amazon.com. Your "Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga" looks like just the book for me. Alas, my local public library doesn't have the book as yet...I am confident that they will sooner or later. I'll just have to break my rule never to buy a book that I haven't read. I am very impressed with what I have read here. So much so that, yesterday I ordered your breathing tape and booklet "Fat Free Yoga" . Unfortunately I'll have some down time till the materials arrive. I'd like to use this time to locate a class in my area. (Kent Ohio) However I am not having much luck.

Because, I really don't know where to start looking. Any suggestions how to find a good instructor ? Yoga has been prescribed to me by a Physician friend, for stress management. I am currently undergoing cupuncture, for tinnitus caused we think by stress.

Thank-you
Sharie Stranathan
Rootstown Ohio

Dear Sherie,

I have read recently some studies that relate breathing to tinnitus of the ears. I hope you will find the breath tape helpful. Let me know how your progress goes!

Regarding classes...don't really know where Kent is in relationship to Columbus etc., but if you call the following places they may be able to direct you to classes in your area.

**Heartland Yoga, Columbus (614) 268-2925
Gentle Yoga, Cincinnati, (513) 631-5255
Bhumi's Yoga, Cleveland (216) 228-8988
Yoga For You, Toledo (419)841-6085**

Also, for more ideas, check the yellow pages, the park districts, the YMCA, the local junior college. Happy non-violent hunting!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Intense Teacher

Dear Joan,

Hi, I have been working with complete idiots guide to yoga for about two months, it has been great. I want to start a yoga class but, have a few questions. Can you recommend any classes in the Arlington Heights or LaGrange, IL area??

I am a teacher and do not have any commitments until August 24, do you know of any intense (ones that meet a whole lot, not stressful) Yoga classes in the Chicago area???

How about classes on Sanskrit?? I have a back ground in MMK Buddhism if that helps.

Thank-you
Jordan Wilner

LaGrange, IL

Dear Jordan,

Kathleen Wright teaches Iyengar classes in LaGrange. I do not know where she is located or her phone number. If any readers out there can help me out....thank you! For other classes, also try Garden of Yoga (708) 802-1329

Regarding regular classes through August. I teach Power Yoga classes every Tues and Thurs morning through July at "Yoga Among Friends" in Downers Grove. I guarantee you will work up a sweat in these classes. Check out your local Yoga Chicago newspaper for more class offerings too! Regarding Sanskrit studies, The Temple of Kriya Yoga has occasional classes in Chicago. Check it out!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Earth Salutes!

Dear Joan,

Hello there. I was directed to your web site as one place in which I might be able to find out some information on Earth Salutes. I am familiar with sun and moon salutes, but have only heard of earth salutes off-handedly. Any info you have would be greatly appreciated. As I don't have regular access to the internet. If not, cest la vie. I will attempt to get back on here to check out your site again soon.

On another matter, I noticed your philosophy section on yamas and niyamas. As a monk and a teacher of a type of meditation called the Ishaya's Ascension, I thought you might be interested in a book by my teacher, Maharshi Sadasiva Isham. It's called ENLIGHTENMENT by MSI. It's a wonderful retranslation of the yoga sutras of Patanjali from the standpoint of an enlightened master, not a heady scholar, which makes a great difference. Speaking of yoga, union, from the standpoint of experience, rather than theory, makes an incredible shift from the sutras being the steps one takes to gain higher awareness to the sutras being the stages one experiences as you open up to more and more of who you are. I would highly recommend you checking it out. I can send you a copy if you'd like, or you can buy it at any major book store that deals through New Leaf or Ingrams distributors. MSI has also written several other books, but I think that Enlightenment is right up your alley. Feel free to ask for more info if you want it.

I appreciate your help and time.
Jai Isham
Indrananda Ishaya

Dear Jai,

Thank you, Jai...for your informative letter. I do not know of earth salutes, other than its relationship to sun salute. (a series connecting the sun to earth and earth to sun)

I also have never heard of your teacher, but it does sound like his books are most interesting. I will try looking them up. It must be something about this week, I have been getting books from students in my classes too...everyone is pushing me to study more...and I gladly accept!

**Namaste,
Joan**

A NEW ERA!

Dear Joan,

I am a beginning Yoga Practitioner. I've read your book, *Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga* and greatly credit it with helping me to stick with Yoga these last two years.

I noticed, from your homepage, that you are doing a book signing in Schaumburg, IL. I am from Grand Rapids, MI, but I will be in Wheaton that day. I would love to meet you and have you sign my book. The map indicates these two cities are not far apart. Just one question: do you have an address, or even instructions on how to get to the Borders in Schaumburg? I ask because I am not familiar with the area.

Hope to See You,
David W. Landrum
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Way the weather the terrain the discipline the leadership. -- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Dear David,

Gee, our book came out last November which is less than a year ago. So, as much as we (Eve and I) would like to, we can't really take credit for inspiring you in your wonderful yoga journey 2 years ago....but thanks! We were there in spirit!

Would really enjoy meeting you at the Borders Booksigning next week, David. Borders is off of Hwy 355 and west on Golf Rd. For more specific directions do call the store directly. And, lastly, regarding the "era," this is 1998. Hope to see you at Borders, David, in this very era! :)

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact Amazon.com. Thank you all kindly.

**Namaste,
Joan**

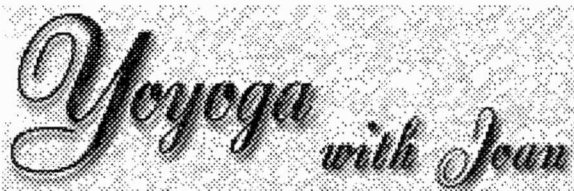
**Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail tojoan@yoyoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

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Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: yojoan@yoyoga.com

'oyoga will be updated on the 1st and 15th of every month.



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Yo Joan



A Weighty Subject

Dear Joan,

A few years ago I discovered weight lifting. It is a discipline that brings me great health, joy, creativity and peace of mind. Recently I have added yoga 2-3 days a week, after training or on a rest day. My posture, joint flexibility, and muscle recovery time has greatly improved. Athletic stretching never made me feel this way! I especially enjoy the asanas that lengthen the spine and relieve pressure on the vertebrae. In this category, what is your favorite asana? What other asanas do you suggest for the weight lifter?



Thank you,
Deborah Jo Mance
Colorado Springs, CO

Dear Deborah

Yes. I completely understand how you feel combining weight lifting with yoga. Weight lifting is an EXCELLENT combination with yoga because of its focus on strength building and yoga's focus on flexibility. Now, yoga can also be strength building, but one works with one's own body weight (which for some of us can be quite significant!), instead of free weights. As yoga is a study of balance, it will not build the kind of muscle mass that weight lifting can.

Poses that I would recommend as particularly beneficial for weight lifters are poses that work with the shoulders and the hips. These are two areas that seem to get extremely tight for weight lifters. Perhaps because of all the bent knees the hips get unusually tight, and

certainly the lifting of the weights can tighten the shoulder area.

For shoulders, I would recommend a daily practice of cow pose and downward dog pose. For hips, I would recommend tree pose and butterfly. Also, it is important to recognize that in yoga, unlike weight lifting, you are not trying to defy gravity, you are trying to work with it to open up. For example, do not push the knees toward the floor in butterfly, instead let gravity gradually work with them in bringing them closer to the floor. Breathe deeply and steadily and try and find a sense of peace in the pose. Stay with the pose for a series of breaths. No need to struggle, this is a time to let go.

Best wishes in your continuing practice, Deborah. Maybe I'll see you at the gym sometime too!

Namaste,
Joan

Round and Sound

Dear Joan,

I am a brand-new practitioner of yoga (since March, when I got hooked on it at the New Age Health Spa in Neversink, NY) and now study with several teachers in my area, taking classes about 3 times a week. I am still looking for the "perfect teacher," and wonder if you have any recommendations in the Bucks County, PA area.

I noted the letter from Melissa Reed on your website regarding yoga for "sturdy" women, and I too have that concern. For a while I ran a support group named "Women of Substance" for those of us who are active, healthy, and happy--but not thin. One of my current dreams is to become both a massage therapist and yoga teacher, and offer both to people who may be self-conscious about their weight. I am a vegetarian, extremely active physically, and at 50, feel and look great--but I weigh over 200 pounds. I'm no longer self-conscious about it--I wear a one-piece leotard to yoga class--but it can be intimidating for many of us to go to a class or for a massage when "everyone" else is skinny.

In your experience, are there (or is there a need for) classes of this type? Are there any particular styles of yoga especially appropriate for those of us who are a bit rounder? Or any teachers who address this issue? I know I will need much more study before I can consider becoming a teacher myself, but I hope to at least begin exploring the idea soon, along with certification in massage.

Janna Walsh
Newtown, PA

PS: Your book is great--I have shared it with a number of friends, and find it one of the better books on yoga I have seen.

Dear Janna,

I have had a number of students over the years who have asked if I would offer classes specifically tailored for larger bodies. I try my best to make the yoga classes I teach inclusive of all shapes and sizes. I do realize that there are certain conditions and concerns for people with rounder bodies - for example, wrists can get sore very fast in downward dog pose - this can be alleviated by placing a rolled up mat under the heels of the hands to help the weight distribute more evenly into the fingers. Forward bends can also be uncomfortable. In child pose for example, try separating the knees wide so that the stomach can rest between the legs as you bend forward.

Continue your search for a yoga teacher who is sensitive to the special physical differences among people. Perhaps you can educate the teacher and say "Do you have any suggestions for ways I can work in this pose more effectively?" or "This pose is mighty uncomfortable. What can I adjust to help find more peace in this pose?" And if the only answer the teacher can give you is "your weight," then you know you have a teacher who is not dealing in the present. See what transpires. This will help the teacher to grow as it also helps your practice to grow. Sometimes the teacher may simply not be aware of the struggles of the students unless specific concerns are brought up. All can learn and become more sensitive by your sensitive involvement.

There are a couple wonderful teachers - Linda DeMarco and Genia Paulie Haddon, who have a three hour video set out called, "Yoga For Round Bodies." Although I have not seen the videos, I plan on ordering them myself. Their number is 800-793-0666. The tapes can also be ordered through Yoga Journal Magazine.

I do not know of specific teachers in your area, Janna. Do keep your search going with great diligence, and the fruits of your labor will soon manifest.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Awk de leber!

Dear Joan,

Hey Now! I love your book the Idiots guide to Yoga. It really has helped me along the path. I have a friend from Berlin, Germany who is interested in Yoga. I have been helping her find her way. I'm wondering if the idiots guide is printed in German?

Thank You.
Joe Costa
Butler, New Jersey

Dear Joe,

My publisher informed me, "So far there isn't a German publisher for CIG TO YOGA -- but you never know!" I hope that, perhaps in the meantime, you may be able to translate for your friend? Thanks, Joe!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Huh?

Dear Joan,

Please send me free cucumber seeds.

Deborah Ruzzi
Southington, CT

Dear Deborah,

Sorry, wrong number.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Lakeside Yoga!

Dear Joan,

I live in the Chicago, IL area and would like to be put on your mailing list. I also would like to know where I could find a nice, spa with healthful baths, oils, massage etc in the Chicagoland area. I do not want to spend too much, but since I work hard would like to relax my body and mind.

Thanks,
Gwen MCC
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Gwen,

I know the perfect place for you - Lakeside Yoga in Evanston. Monica Mcquire is the owner and operator. At Lakeside Yoga, you can receive a fabulous massage, jacuzzi, take a yoga class, and be inspired. Lakeside Yoga's number is 847-866-6793. Happy spa travels!

Namaste,
Joan

Vegi Inspiration...

Dear Joan,

I think it is great that there was a tie for the recipe winners! I'm glad I got to participate. I enjoyed reading your thoughts on vegetarianism in the "Yoga Tips" section this morning. I appreciated your honesty and your willingness to share "where you are" with this.

I have been a vegetarian for eight years. I grew up on a farm and have a father who is an avid hunter. Living in a small, rural, Midwestern community, I knew only one family who were vegetarian. They were Seventh-Day Adventists. The entire family was tall, thin, and very pale. Everyone blamed it on their not eating meat - not their genetics! But for some reason, I felt very compelled to become a vegetarian. I read the few books on the subject that our small, local library offered. With that, I gave up meat "cold turkey" - so to say - and have not once thought about going back to my previous eating habits.

Being vegetarian to me has meant several things over the years. First, I related it to the environment and how devastating factory farming is. Then, I saw it as my commitment to animal rights. Next, it became a real health issue. Now, it has blended all those things together into a sound philosophy that is a fully integrated part of me.

Yoga teaches us non-violence, and for me, vegetarianism incorporates that into our daily lives better than any thing else. By eating a vegetarian diet, I am being non-violent towards my body, towards the lives and well-being of animals, and also towards the environment. It's an active place to start practicing non-violence and has lead me to change my thinking on many issues. I am a more loving, peaceful person because of it.

Perhaps you could make a commitment to eat vegetarian three or four days each week. Let it build from there if it feels right. Each day does make a difference.

Brightest blessings,
Bill Yarnall
Charleston, SC

Dear Jill,

Thank you for your inspiring and encouraging letter. Your personal experience, as well as your suggestions in taking one day at a time are encouraging, realistic, and well-headed.

It has been months now since I have had any kind of fish or chicken. It has been years since I have eaten any other kind of meat. So, perhaps that would mean to some that I am a vegetarian. Since I still mentally desire fish, I do not consider myself yet a vegetarian. However, I will soon be purchasing a fish tank filled with beautiful fish with hopes that our lives together will increase my sensitivity to this sensitive creature. My cat loves the idea too....however, I have no control over his thoughts. I will get a secure cover for the tank.

Namaste,
Joan

Marvelous Michigan Man!

Dear Joan,

It was wonderful to meet you at Borders in Schaumburg on Monday. I was scheduled to leave Wheaton that morning, but I went to Chicago, hung around in the Museums until about five in the afternoon, returned and drove up to see you. I am glad I did.

I had bought *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga** when I first got interested in the subject. I have read other Yoga books and many different types of instructional books in other areas, but, as I mentioned, yours is very well-written--certainly the best-written instruction book I have ever read. It does several things:

1. Is easy to read without being too simple;
2. Makes the subject understandable. Yoga is a complex thing, but you (and your co-author) manage to explain in terms anyone could understand.
3. Is well-organized. Again, you do an excellent job of systematically explaining a very complex philosophy. The "chunks" you break it into are perfect, both in length and sequence.
4. Your humor is refreshing. "Wise Yogi Says" and your explanations of the Yoga do's and don't's are great (I like "Cool it, Casanova" as an explanation for the one on control of desire).

I bought the book, read it, understood it, liked it, and soon began Yoga classes. I have found a teacher who is remarkably like you. She is a quiet, gentle woman who has internalized the principles of Yoga and communicates them in her teaching but also communicates them in her manner, in the way she behaves, talks, responds. I probably have about 25 years left on this earth and plan to make Yoga an active part of all those years--and, like you said Monday, doing that might add to the years, which is okay with me.

So continue doing what you are doing. And if you are *ever* in the Grand Rapids area please let me know. We have a huge Barnes & Nobels here (GR is a metro area of about 650,000), so maybe a signing here would be worth the trip!

Namaste,
David W. Landrum, Ph.D.
Cornerstone College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Way
the weather
the terrain
the discipline
the leadership. -- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Dear David,

Thank you very much. I am so happy to hear that yoga is planned to be a continuing part of your life. I must admit, I hesitated posting your letter because I felt it was so flattering. Then I realized that if it were a negative letter, I would not have any hesitation with posting it and addressing it. So, in the spirit of yoga, I am posting your letter in heartfelt gratitude for the many beautiful things you noted....and to let you know, that in yogic philosophy you (we) will probably be around on this planet for many, many, many, more years to come (LOTS more than 25:). So, I'll be seeing you around again, David...I am sure of it.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact Amazon.com. Thank you all kindly.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Yo Joan



Muscle in on Sciatica

Dear Joan,

I am new to yoga and getting "hooked" quickly. I have been dealing with lower back pain and sciatica since last December; and, after many unsuccessful experiences with doctors and physical therapists, I turned to yoga for therapy.

Your book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga," has been very helpful and enlightening. I feel much better in many ways because of yoga; however, I often seem to do things that aggravate my sciatica which seems to limit my yoga. What should I do (or not do) to rid myself of the pain I get from sciatica?

I am a 37 year old father of four and very frustrated with this sciatica pain. I hope you can help me some more. Thank you.

Paul Koch
Elmhurst, Illinois



Dear Paul,

The Piriformis is a little muscle in the buttocks that can have profound effects on one's health if it is overly tight. I have found people with an overly contracted piriformis muscle to experience intense sciatic pain as well. I can not help but think the two may be connected. So, next time you get a massage, ask the therapist to work on this piriformis muscle.

I will also suggest a couple of yoga postures you may find helpful. Try lying on your back with your knees bent. Cross your right ankle over your left thigh and let the right knee come out to the side. Draw the left thigh in towards you and hold it. Breathe deeply.

Release the pose and then do the other side. This is a preparatory exercise.

Some specific poses would be the Tree pose and the Butterfly. Focus on poses that help release the hips. Backbends tend to tighten the buttocks, so try staying off of these types of poses when you are experiencing this pain. When your pain subsides, backbends can strengthen this area. My concern for you now tho, would be to focus on loosening it up.

**Namaste,
Joan**

The Keys to Florida teachers...

Dear Joan,

I have just bought the CIG to Yoga, which is wonderful. I have tried on and off to do Yoga for years but nothing ever clicked. But your book has really renewed my enthusiasm. I would like very much to practice with a class once a week, but it seems that all the instructors I find here in the Fort Myers, Florida area (where I live) are into Iyengar yoga. This practice seems more intense than I would like. Do you think, however, that a class with an Iyengar instructor would be okay? Or can you recommend any other instructor in my area? I truly appreciate your advice. Thanks!

Becky Donlan
Fort Meyers

Dear Janna,

The intensity of the classes is highly particular to the instructor. I would encourage you to take at least one or two classes with an instructor before making a decision. I have studied with some really wonderful, creative, and open Iyengar instructors. I looked up Fort Meyers in my Yoga International Teachers Directory and only found Iyengar Instructors there. So you are right! I hope though that you will find a teacher soon that you can physically and emotionally connect to.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Next...Dr. Ruth?

I have answered the following long letter, from Kathy in Iowa City, Iowa, in "bold" between specific numbered questions...Namaste, Joan)

Dear Joan,

I am a beginner with yoga and it's philosophies and found your book a great foundation to work from. Thank you! I am very interested in seeing where a yogi lifestyle will lead and have some questions. Numerous questions. Please answer them!

1. I read how necklaces and bracelets should be removed before yoga and meditation because it can alter the flow of energy. How about belly rings and toe rings? Obviously the toe ring is easy to remove each time but the belly ring isn't. What is your opinion about the significance of having a belly ring during practice? And... aside from times when one is doing yoga or meditating, how much does the presence of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, toe rings and belly rings alter the energy during one's everyday living?

jb: It is understood that metal can have an effect on energy, not only rings in or on various body parts, but also metal in one's mouth from cavities, in surgical pins from broken bones, etc.. Awareness is the first key. Once one is aware, one can work to seek balance. Numerous scientific studies have been done on metal's effects on the human body and more are currently being done all the time. Perhaps someday, Science will provide us with enough "answers" that we will have absolutely no excuses for unenlightenment! From a purely physical stand point, bracelets, necklaces, rings, etc., can get in the way of one's comfort and freedom of movement in hatha yoga practice. There are reasons why yoga masters of years ago (and many currently) wore/wear only loin cloths.

i: 2. I read your explanation about virtuous sex. Understood that part and how that may or may not lead to celibacy. What about masturbation?

jb: Touchy subject. Since yoga is about control of the sexual desire, and if any form of sexuality gets out of hand then certainly it is to be curbed (sort of speak). The objective is to control your desires, not let your desires control you. By gaining control, one can ultimately relinquish control and discover enlightenment. If this answer is not adequate, perhaps Dr. Ruth might be the next to ask?

ki: 3. I have read in other books that increased sexual energy is experienced by some people when beginning yoga due to the opening of chakras and blocked energy. How should one deal with this when it occurs?

jb: Sensitively. Yoga is about uncovering your inner beauty. Steady practice of yoga will make you more beautiful. By becoming more beautiful, your ego may start to swell and you will become confused thinking that your outer beauty is your inner beauty. When this happens, one becomes lost again in thinking that the outer world is truthful. The inner world is where the truth exists and it is a constant process to uncover the deepest truths of this inner beauty.

ki: 4. In your book, you continually mention that the one most important posture of yoga is shavasana. I enjoy all of the other postures in your book... but when it comes to shavasana, I find that I am dreading it. Almost of sense of fear. I feel as if my body is quite relaxed but my mind is BUSY! At first it didn't feel comfortable whatsoever to lay there and I couldn't do it because I was preoccupied by the time and the fact that my mind so easily drifts from the mantra. So I began to set my alarm clock for 10 minutes and would tell myself to just try to lie for ten minutes. This is even hard! My mind drifts... I don't feel comfortable...UGH. Interestingly enough, I am not a person who has any problems falling asleep at night (2 minutes does it for me) and I don't

mind being alone. I never thought I would have a problem "being still." I realize it's a mind thing and not a body thing... I would really like your advice. Thank you.

Joan: Try a more intense work out of hatha yoga before going into shavasana. This will help the body to quite down. You are absolutely right that it is a mind thing...but it is also a body thing. It is the ultimate body - mind connection. The key is to become completely relaxed while remaining fully conscious. Shavasana (total relaxation pose) is a very difficult posture indeed! Many people assume shavasana to be quite easy, until they truly try it and find out just the opposite. People either fall asleep (losing consciousness) or become tense and anxious. You are not alone in your difficulties. I often look around my classes in shavasana and find many either snoring or fidgeting. Keep on working with shavasana. In time, the mili seconds of peace will turn into seconds, which will turn into minutes, etc. I hope my responses have been helpful, Kathy....

**Namaste,
Joan**

Blockbuster or Bust!

Dear Joan,

I really enjoyed your book, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. I have been practicing three days a week to two yoga tapes: Jane Fonda and Kathy Smith New Yoga Basics. What is your opinion on these tapes. Can you recommend other yoga video tapes or is it better to work out to silence or music. Your book was very inspiring and well written. Thanks you for introducing me to yoga and all its benefits. I have noticed a difference in my flexibility in the six weeks I have been practicing and my daily shoulder pain has been greatly reduced. Thanks.

Erin
Washington, D.C.

Dear Erin,

I am sorry to say I have never seen these videos. I honestly do not own a video recorder. Someday, in the not too distant future, I will get myself one and watch all the wonderful videos I am hearing about. I still prefer to use audio tapes or silence. I prefer to dim any lights and light a small candle. I do my personal hatha practice in the quietness of this soft light. As I turn off the lights, I turn off the competition (even with myself) and let the inner light shine.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact [Amazon.com](#). Thank you all kindly.

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Joan**

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Dizzy?

Dear Joan,

I am interested in Yoga, but am concerned because I become dizzy easily when my head is down below my heart. I start to feel a little hot and almost nauseous. I do movements requiring lots of transitions between standing upright and when putting my head down. Do you have any suggestions?

Erika
Bellevue, Nebraska



Dear Erika,

I would suggest examining your diet. What do you eat before yoga class? It sounds like you may have low blood sugar. It is not unusual to feel slightly dizzy sometimes when the head is held below your knees for a period of time. This is also why it is suggested to remain in child's pose for a period of time after being inverted (like in headstand, handstand, etc.) This helps even the blood out, balance the body, and prevent dizziness. I would also suggest discussing this with your physician, especially if you find that your diet is not the key to this problem. Yoga asanas are meant to improve your health and physical well being. You are responsible for determining if you are physically fit and properly skilled to practice any of these exercises.

namaste,
Joan

Mat Buster

Dear Joan,

I started doing yoga about a month ago and I really enjoy it. I know it is great exercise and has many health benefits but does it burn fat? I have done some research on yoga and I have never seen anything mentioned about a connection between yoga and losing weight.

Janine
Nova Scotia, Canada

Dear Janine,

Yoga is a lifestyle. Moderation and balance is a part of this lifestyle - this includes in one's diet. A "healthy" vegetarian diet is recommended. By "healthy" this does not mean french fries, coke, and a big bowl of ice cream for dessert (although I do understand the appeal). It means a diet rich in organic vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and water. Our bodies are all different and so are our metabolisms. One person may look at a handful of almonds and gain weight, another person eats all the almonds he or she wants and loses a few pounds.

Yoga is a system of study that involves finding a balance. If your body is out of balance, and your practice of yoga is steady, your body will, over time, come into balance. For some this may mean gaining weight, and for some it may be losing weight. If your objective is to lose weight, I suggest a heavy vinyasa practice (like sun-salutations), or complementing your yoga practice with another aerobic work-out, like swimming, tennis, etc. As you start feeling more happy with your body, you may find everything you need in your yoga lifestyle for a balanced way of life.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Favorite Book

Dear Joan,

Thank you so much for the book. I enjoyed it very much. It was very funny. I am starting with my first yoga

class in October and will be practicing on and off until then (it was the first class that I could find in my price range). I really enjoy that you put these websites in the book because I am finding so much information. I have the question, if there was one book that a beginning yogi should read (except yours, of course) what would it be????

Cheryl
Woburn,MA

Dear Cheryl,

"Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dress for Success

Dear Joan

Greetings, I am about to begin yoga this Wed (Sept 2) and am very excited and nervous. I ordered your book about yoga, but was wondering if you can give me some tips on how to dress for yoga? I was wondering if you can give an overview on what to expect.

I am interested in taking yoga for many reasons:

1. I want better self image
2. I cant sleep at night and heard yoga would help
3. fitness (I want to loose 30 pounds)
4. I want to like myself and be comfortable with ME !

Is there any suggestions you can give >> ????

Thanks ,
John McClung

Dear John,

Wear loose comfortable clothing for your yoga class. Clothing that is not restricted around the waist, and permits you to easily sit down, twist, and generally move easily. Cotton is also nice to your skin in helping it to breathe easier.

Your reasons for taking yoga classes are wonderful and certainly obtainable. Every teacher brings with him or her their own individual style. Be open to seeing, hearing, feeling what happens, and be prepared to move. Be patient in your studies and supplement your classes with reading materials on yoga. It is a personal study and is non-competitive. I am glad you have ordered our book. Eve Adamson (my co-author) and I address your

letter in detail in it! Funny that this is the first time I am hearing from you!!

Best wishes on your yoga journey...

Namaste,
Joan

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact Amazon.com. Thank you all kindly.

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Joan**

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Acne Answer

Dear Joan,

This may seem like an odd question, but I was wondering if there were any yoga postures which are good for skin problems, such as acne. Keep up the great work. I love your web site and your "Idiot's" book was extremely informative.

Thank you,
Kimberly
Laurel Springs, New Jersey.



Dear Kimberly,

Thank you, Kimberly! Since I tend to think of acne as a skin affliction that most often effects the face and back, it would be good to do postures that increase circulation to the area effected. For face and back, I would increase the inverted postures, such as headstand, shoulderstand, downward dog. By inverting the body, you bring more circulation to the upper extremities. Also, a steady practice of breathwork (pranayama) can tremendously improve circulatory effects and help to release waste products from the body through the breath.

At different ages, our hormones are reacting differently. So, if you are at an age when acne is more prevalent (teens - early 20's, was the time for me), be patient and know that this stage is simply a stage that will pass. Watching your diet and staying clear of fried and sugarified foods may help the acne to subside quicker too.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Classes

Dear Joan,

Please send me the schedule of classes, and fees. Do you have classes that focus on muscle toning?

Chuck Scharenberg
Illinois

Dear Chuck,

My classes are all listed in the About Joan section of this website. All hatha yoga classes tone muscles.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Famous Yogis

Dear Joan,

Thanks so much for the wonderful book on yoga. I started taking yoga classes through my school. Yoga has turned my life around. It has improved my grades, concentration and relationships with others. When I finally grasped the concepts of yoga and its teachings I had more confidence and consequently, my life improved. Now I would like to ask a favor of you...I have been searching the web endlessly and was wondering if you could give me the names of any famous or well-known people who practice yoga?? I would like to include their names in a report I'm giving to my health class. Thanks so much..

I'm in Point Pleasant, NJ but I attend school at St. Rose in Belmar, NJ. Yes, that's a Catholic school that actually promotes yoga as a relaxation and a way of getting in touch with God. I asked why the Church promotes their belief and their response I got was that, God lives within each of us and yoga is merely another way to access the divinity within you. I'm really excited about letting a whole class know about yoga and its incredible benefits.

Thanks again,
Megan
Point Pleasant, NJ

Dear Megan,

Thank you for your kind letter, Megan. Sounds like you are attending quite a progressive school! Here are some famous names for starters...Jane Fonda, Sting, Quincy Jones, Raquel Welch, Ali Macgraw, Ruth Buzzi, Dennis Weaver, Madonna, Deepak Chopra....

**Namaste,
Joan**

STOP sticking your neck out!

Dear Joan,

I have been practicing yoga for several weeks, and I am doing well. I have immersed myself in the philosophy and am reading anything I can find. I have one problem, however. I can place my palms flat on the floor without discomfort, and do many of the asanas, but when I do the plough, I find I get terrible pains in my legs later in the day. I had a neck injury several years ago, and the pain in my legs is similar to nerve pain (not muscle) I need some tips on how to stretch my spine at the cervical area as that is where I had the injury. I can do the bridge, sun salutation, and many others without problem, but the stretch on my neck is just too much with the "plough" Any suggestions on how I can strengthen and stretch that part of my spine?

Thanks!!!,
Betty
Taylor, Michigan

Dear Betty,

My suggestion, Betty, is to STOP doing plough. I commend you for isolating which posture is bringing you the pain. NOW is the time to check this out with your physician. Bring pictures of yoga poses to his office and show him the one's that give you pain. See if he can determine for you which of the poses will benefit your neck injury and which poses to stay away from. Not all the poses are for everyone. We are all built differently with different physical histories.

You say you had a cervical injury. This could be in any area of the seven upper vertebrae in the spine. I would not recommend any inversions that put strain on the neck (like plough, fish, headstand, shoulderstand), especially if you are not working under the personal guidance of a physician and an experienced and knowledgeable yoga teacher. I hope you will take my suggestions seriously, Betty. You may even enlighten your doctor by presenting all the options available to you in your physical therapy. Many doctors are not really aware of yoga and may be quite interested in the poses that yoga offers. Do keep me

posted on your progress.

Namaste,
Joan

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Thank you for all the many letters regarding "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I have been receiving so many, I have not been able to post them all. But know that each one is received, appreciated, and responded to (if not through this website, then through your email). I would like to inform anyone interested, that Amazon.com also posts reviews of the book. If you would like to post a review there, just contact Amazon.com. Thank you all kindly.

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Yo Joan



Forward Bends are quieting

Dear 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"?



Thank you,
Deborah Mance
Colorado

Dear Deborah,

Your body may need some breathing space too. Forward bends quiet the body down. I suggest doing forward bends before going to sleep to help stretch, open, and relax your body for the night.

I have found this "rocky mountain high" to happen to me too! Sometimes I am feeling so incredibly great, I can't sleep! Once this went on for a full week, I then got physically sick for a few days (from lack of sleep). Even though you may not feel tired to fall sleep, 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 wake, try and honor your body and get some sleep. Soon the body and mind will catch p to each other and you will find your sleep even more restful than ever before. Mine is.

The term "awakening of the spine", in my interpretation, would mean a release and opening of the chakra system of energy flow that is encased along the spine. By opening and freeing the spine, making it more flexible and stronger, one opens, expands, and strengthens the dynamic, incredible power of the chakras.

Namaste,
Joan

Sweet things

Dear Joan,

Hi Joan! As many of your other fans have expressed, I'm lovin' that "Idiot's Guide"!! Here's an odd question that I'm not sure there is a yogic answer to (but there probably is). Are there any asanas and/or meditations for intense cravings for sweets? Even addictions to sweets?

Namaste,
Amy Bartleson
Bayfield, WI

Dear Amy,

Check out the chapter, Amy, on "rajas, tamas, sattvic diets." Perhaps you will begin to understand these cravings from a different context. We are often on pendulums, swinging from a fast high (rajas) to a couch potato low (tamas). How can we stop the constant swinging and find balance (sattva)?

One way is to study the asanas slowly and with full awareness. There is no rush to be a "master yogi." In fact, the more you rush to obtain this goal, the more elusive the goal becomes! Focus on your breath in the movements. How do your breaths help you move? See if your breath can help you in your yoga postures.

Next time you have a craving for sweets, try replacing unhealthy sweets for healthy ones - such as fruits. Next time fruits don't satisfy the craving - try some Bastrika breathing - page 70. Let me know how your hatha (balance) moves along.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Changing patterns

Dear Joan,

I started Yoga classes and really enjoy them the only thing is time by the time I leave work and do my yoga class for an hour and a half and get home is after 8pm and I have tons of things to do before I can relax and watch tv, read, go to bed ... etc and therefore my yoga class ends up being more stress do you have any suggestions ?

John
Baltimore, MD

Dear John,

I suggest learning ways to relax that don't involve TV. Learn to arrange your time so that your yoga class is the way you "relax" before you go to bed. Good night.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Readers,

My computer crashed at the end of September. That is why you have not had an update from me for a whole month. It has taken me that long to get this computer back up! Unfortunately, in the process, I lost many files, letters and addresses - including an extensive mailing list of yoyoga readers. If you would like to be on the "Brand New" mailing list I am forming, please contact me. If you have not received a response from you letter in the past month, please forgive me and my computer, and write me again. Thank you kindly.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Yo Joan



Tummy Insomnia

Dear Joan,

I recently started practicing yoga after reading your book. My question is: I practice around 6PM at night and eat shortly after it feels great. But, around 6AM in the morning I wake up with pain in my abdomen, which wakes me up and keeps me up for hours. Help what could it be?

Kate
Pensacola, FL



Dear Kate,

Please check with your physician. If pain wakes you up, this is not something to ignore. After you have checked with your physician to rule out a specific health problem that could be remedied through medical supervision, then write me again, and we will explore this further together.

Namaste,
Joan

A Great Feeling!

Dear Joan,

Namaste, I happened to chance upon your book ("Idiot's guide to yoga") in the store, bought it on a whim and am extremely glad I did- As an 'Americanized' Indian , I feel I am getting back to something I already was aware of but never really understood.

Even though I have only been using the techniques in your book for a week, I feel great.

Thanks
Hari Santanam
Plainfield, NJ

Dear Hari,

Your letter sparked my heart to smile:)

**Namaste,
Joan**

Certifiably _____

Dear Joan,

I read your book- enjoyed it greatly. I live near you and I just wanted to know some information regarding classes in the area. I am also interested in becoming certified in Yoga. Can you please explain the procedure, the benefits to becoming certified and also advise me of where you went for certification?

Thank you for taking the time to read this and to respond to my questions.

Judi
Tinley Park, IL

Dear Judi,

Pick up a free copy of Yoga Chicago newspaper for a listing of classes in your area. You can get a copy at the Borders Bookstore in Tinley Park.

Regarding certification, I received my certification at the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago. I highly recommend this program. I graduated in 1994 and at that time the program was 14 months long. Now it is shorter, but I am certain that the quality is still very high. Classes meet every Saturday, with assorted workshops throughout the program. Also, you are encouraged to attend as many yoga classes as you can at the temple while in the program. Yoga classes are offered there every day of the week.

I just happened upon the Temple when I was driving by after I had recently moved back to the Chicago area. When I walked in, I saw a picture of Paramhansa Yogananda on the wall and felt an instant affiliation to the style of teachings there. Paramahansa's books started me on the yoga path many years ago. Teachers training was starting that week, and I immediately enrolled. I had no plans at that time of becoming a teacher, I just wanted to study yoga more intensely. The universe sure planned it well!

Another school I have studied through that I highly recommend is the Shivanada School. Their teachers training programs are at various locations around the country, but not in Illinois. The programs are one month long. I have been on numerous retreats through the Shivananda organization and look forward to someday doing a month long submersion into their teachers program. Maybe I will see you there someday too?

If you are interested in studying Iyengar's style of yoga, check out the "Yoga Circle" in Chicago. Gabriel Halpern is the director and he has an teacher's apprentice program there. I have heard so many wonderful things about him and his center. I plan to start taking some classes there myself.

Hope this info will get you started on your teaching path, Judi.

Jamaste,
Joan

There's no place like home...but where is it?

Dear Joan,

I am reading the book Yoga for Idiots and am wanting to find a teacher so that I may begin practicing yoga. I have looked in the phone book the yellow pages and gone to many exercise places and cannot find many instructors. What should I do?

Richard Olson
Logan Utan

Dear Richard,

I have received many letters this issue from across the country asking me about yoga classes in specific locations. I address this response to all people out there looking for classes (Jodi, Sheri...and, or course, you, dear Richard).

Go to your local bookstore or library and check out the January issue of the magazine called "Yoga International." In it is a "1999 Yoga Teachers and Classes" booklet. Here you will find everything you are looking for on a regional, national, and international basis. It is a great magazine and a particularly great issue too!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Let's get physical!

Dear Joan,

Hi! Someone else who burns the midnight oil, eh? Well, I found out that I have arthritis in my upper spine and back, and just finished a month of physical therapy. The PT was amazed at how flexible I am, and how I could relax so well (shavasana). I will probably never be able to do a headstand or the plough, but she told me to continue with my routine because she couldn't believe how "bendable" I am. If I had not been doing yoga, I would not be able to move the way that I can. I am doing great, and am no longer in therapy. I have worked my way back up to an hour a day, and along with meditation have once again embarked on my road to enlightenment. I can't thank you enough for your concern, and your help. My PT said that any asanas like "cobra" in which I arch my neck backwards is beneficial. Any ideas? Thank you once again, and I hope your computer behaves!!

Namaste,
Betty Taylor,
Michigan

Dear Betty,

Another wonderful pose (that is really the cobra upside down) is the half-fish pose. It is demonstrated as the yoyoga asana of the week. Check it out. It is highly beneficial for energy releases. Lying down spinal twist also releases the neck in ways that are not over straining. Have you explored the wheel pose? It is noted in the CIG to Yoga book. At this point, half-wheel I would recommend for your exploring, where your body becomes like a table. Also, simple neck stretches where you place your fingertips on your clavicle bone and pull slightly down on the platysma muscle that attaches there. This stretches the neck in a way that does not over contract the back of the neck. I hope you find a good yoga teacher out in your area, Betty, who can help you to continue exploring the asanas in ways and means that are most beneficial for you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Spiral is where it's at!

Dear Joan,

I have recently completed your "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" book. I found it very helpful and entertaining. However, as I am a beginner and have not yet memorized all of the poses, I must constantly refer back to the book. I was wondering if you know if I could find some type of laminated (fold-out) wall chart that illustrates all of the poses, or if you would consider making one available in the near future. I think it would be great in that it would facilitate a more natural "flow" in my workouts when a quick at-a-glance reference is needed, without having to completely stop and look it up in the book. Thank you!

Eric
Daphne, AL

P.S. I have just started your "Idiot's Guide to Massage" book, and it appears every bit as good as your yoga book.

Dear Eric,

Thank you for the great suggestion. I may honestly do this poster in the not too distant future. The orange card in the front of the book is meant as a tear-out card for sun-salutation. Might you find this helpful for starters? After all, sun-salutation is simply a combination of numerous asanas. Any of the specific asanas in the series can be held for longer periods of time or simply done independently of the entire sun-salutation. Also, my little self-published books which are available in the Yoyoga Bookstore are spiral bound with the specific purpose in mind of making the book easier to place on the floor and work with in your hatha practice.

I am happy you are also enjoying our (Eve Adamson co-writer) new massage book. I have not gotten many letters yet on it... yours is the first! I look forward to getting more feedback on it as the days move along. Eve and I have another book coming out in a few weeks. It is what yoga and massage ultimately lead to.....Meditation.

Do keep in touch, Eric.

**Namaste,
Joan**

get a kick from yoga!

Dear Joan,

I am currently teaching Yoga in my area and wondered about certification. I am a certified Kick-fit and aerobic instructor and would like to add Yoga to my list. Can you offer any suggestion for certifications in my area. Also I would like to make Yoga a more full time activity any suggestions on the business angle?

Thanks,
Sharon
Smithton, IL

Dear Sharon,

My suggestion is to follow your heart. Simply do/study/work at what you love and business or people will gravitate towards you. That is my business angle approach. Regarding a certification program, I addressed this in the first few letters of this issue. I hope you find those responses helpful.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hip Hip Hooray!

Dear Joan,

I have the complete idiots guide to yoga. I have read it all the way through and am more than ready to start my yoga sessions. I play soccer semi-professionally and am wanting to make my self more flexible. I also want to make my mind stronger and put it in better control of my body. I have tried to do the meditative pose (the easy one) with my back straight it seems like something always starts to tense up, especially when I am inhaling and exhaling deeply. If my back isn't tense then my hip flexors are. What can I do to make myself relax more. I have been doing the 15 minute sessions three times a day. Thanks for any advice you may have for me.

Jacob Palmer
Birmingham, AL

Dear Jacob,

I suggest using pillows under your knees and at the tip of your tailbone. As your strength and flexibility increases, you will find easy pose easier. A teacher once suggested to me to put an old phone book under my knees and every day rip out one page. Soon, you will have your knees touching the floor easily, however there is no rush...and a phone book has lots of pages.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Odes to Videos

Dear Joan,

I enjoyed the Idiot's Guide to Yoga very much and have been trying to teach myself yoga. I haven't been able to find where yoga classes are being taught in southern Illinois. I know you are very busy but was wondering if you can tell me when your video will be out. I believe it would be easier to learn yoga by watching your video then by trying to teach myself from your book.

Thanks
Joan Fisher
Cobden, IL

Dear Joan,

Please refer to first two questions from above regarding area classes. The video I have out now is called "My Swedish Massage with Joan." It is based on my new book with Eve, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage." I have not made a yoga video, other than an educational 7-tape video series I made for the College of Dupage. Since you are in Illinois, you may be able to rent it through your local college as a "Inter-college loan." Call the College of Dupage at 630-858-2800 to see what possibilities there are for you to view it. I think you will enjoy the series. I cover all the basic poses as well as entering into the philosophy and meditational aspects.

I have always found audio tapes the most helpful in my personal practice. I like the idea of not conforming to someone else's image of how a pose should look. Audio tapes, in my opinion, helps one connect more deeply to what one's particular body is saying. I have an assortment of audio tapes available for this purpose in the Yoyoga Bookstore.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Starting out

Dear Joan,

I am from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and I want to get into a Yoga routine from your book the idiots Guide to Yoga but I am having trouble of where to start at, when I should do Yoga, and when I should meditate. I am very eager to start Yoga but I'm unsure what is really the difference and what is most important when you are first starting out! Please write back!

Sincerely,
Jeannie
Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

Dear Jeannie,

The important point is to simply start. I prefer soft asanas in the morning and more strenuous asanas as the tensions of the day build. I am also much more flexible by evening than I am when I wake up in the morning. 5:30 AM is considered by many traditions, a particularly spiritual time of the day. If you can muster getting up then, that is the time I would suggest to start a meditation/yoga practice. But I am realistic to know that most people can not fathom hatha yoga at that time, so do what is comfortable for you, when it is comfortable.

Your yoga practice can become your meditation practice. By continually working with the asanas, your body will be able to sit comfortably in silence for longer periods of time. Thus, your meditation practice will develop. Do not make your practice a chore. Always look upon it as a welcomed part of your day....or night..

Namaste,
Joan

Retreat

Dear Joan,

I would like to be on your new mailing list. I'm really getting a lot out of "an idiot's guide to Yoga". My question: I'm wondering if you could recommend a good yoga retreat for a long term stay, i.e. couple of months that is not too expensive.

Julie Salerno
Toronto

Dear Julie,

I would recommend the Shivananda Retreat Centers. One location is in Canada! They also have numerous locations around the globe. Reach them in Canada at 800 263-9642, or in the USA at 800-783-9642. I cherish all my retreats I have done through this organization and I do plan on doing many more. Perhaps someday I will see you at one, Julie!

Namaste,
Joan

Levels of understanding

Dear Joan,

I'm curious regarding the different styles of yoga that exist? How would one go about choosing the style best suited for them? Are they really different enough to be concerned about which one to go with? Also, at what point would someone decide to specialize in a particular style i.e. beginner, intermediate, advanced? I'm just wondering about this. Is Hatha one of the styles? What would be the best style for building strength, endurance - in other words a substantial physical workout as well as the spiritual benefits?

Namaste,
Julie
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Dear Julie,

Yoga means "union." The different styles are simply different approaches to the same study of "union of body, mind, and spirit." They can be quite different and one should go with what one feels most open to. In the CIG to Yoga book, we discuss the various styles and give general overviews. Hatha yoga is the yoga of balance that has come to be associated with the physical aspects of study in yoga. Some hatha styles though, are not necessarily best for beginners. For example, ashtanga yoga is quite strenuous and I would personally not recommend it as a beginning practice. I realize that many practitioners out there would disagree, but please let me explain. Because this style is so strenuous, it easily fosters a competitive spirit. This competitive spirit is anti-theoretical

to the approach of yoga. Once one has a firm foundation in the philosophy of non-violence and the yoga sutras, then the strenuous aspects of the ashtanga style take on a deeper significance and lose the competitive nature.

Regarding beginner, intermediate, advanced...what constitutes this is confusing to me. If my body goes easily into a full-backbend, does this classify me as advanced? I hardly think so. In fact, I think someone without any arms or legs can be just as advanced as someone in the most complicated yoga pose. Yoga is a study of the spirit, how does one categorize this? First one has to accept the human body that it is housed in....here comes hatha yoga - a way to explore one's physical body and its limitations and expansiveness. I consider myself a beginner. I realize that many people turn to me for answers to questions, and I try my best, from my limited experience and understanding, to answer. Question your teachers, question the concepts of beginners vs advanced. You have the answers all within you. Yoga is a way to remove the veils of illusions, one by one.

Namaste,
Joan

Dear Readers,

My dear brother died November 13. That is why you have not had an update from me for a whole month. At around the same time, my computer crashed, I lost many files, letters and addresses - including an extensive mailing list of yoyoga readers. If you would like to be on the "Brand New" mailing list I am forming, please contact me. If you have not received a response from your letter in the past month, please forgive me and my computer, and write me again. Thank you kindly.

Namaste,
Joan

Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail to joan@yoyoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.

Yoyoga with Joan

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Yo Joan



Oh where oh where can my guru be?

Dear Joan,

I am beginning my yoga journey and enjoying it, but I wonder: First, how and where do you find a guru? Can your yoga teacher become your guru? I've read that there are far more gurus out there than there are serious students, but I don't know where to start. Secondly, how do you get a mantra? (Don't tell me- from your guru?)



Thank you for your help-
Cheryl Foley
Eric, PA

Dear Cheryl,

The harder you look, the harder it is to find a guru. Your teacher can become your guru. However, I am one of those yogis out there that are very suspicious of self-proclaimed gurus. It gets me nervous. I am sure there are some really wonderful gurus just like there are really wonderful therapists and counselors and priests. However, skeptical me is not really the one to guide you on your guru hunting. I would just tell you to remember the letters...G-U-R-U. And repeat them over and over again.

How does one obtain a mantra? Classically speaking...from a guru. But this "Yo Joan" will tell you, from your own self study and contemplation will you come across your mantra. Perhaps also from a dedicated, truthseeking friend. Your own inherent wisdom is so deep and so powerful. Dig it out. Brush it off. And go with it, Cheryl!!!!

amaste,
Joan

WOW!

Dear Joan,

I am writing this to express how much I have enjoyed the Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga. I have always wanted to get into the practice of it but could never find any books that really explained the whole aspect of it. Your book does. I just bought it a week ago and have just finished reading it. I am excited to start a program for myself. I would really like to get into a class but unfortunately my schedule nor my pocket book can be spared the expense. I thought I wouldn't be able to practice/learn "correctly" without attending a class....I am glad your book informed me otherwise.

Well as your webpage requested, a little bit about myself. My name is Phillip and I am currently living In Dallas Texas (only been here about a year). I am 20 years old and working to pay for my college education at the moment which is one reason why I picked up your book... I need to learn to relax easier. I am also a vegetarian (have been for the last 6 years) and enjoy reading Eastern Philosophy, especially Taoist thinking. I was glad to know that the way I am living my life now and my beliefs fit in so well with the "yoga perspective". Like I said, I am eager to start learning. I will be moving back home to Seattle, Washington in February and am hoping I will be able to find a yoga class there. Question.....What is the best thing to look for in a Yoga class?? Should I only take a class that is taught by someone who is certified?? Please let me know.

Well this letter has dragged on for long enough. If you have read this far then yoga has definitely taught you patience. =)

Thank you,
Phillip
Dallas, Texas

PS. Your Web site mentioned a mailing list and I would love to be on it. Thank you again.

Dear Phillip,

The best thing to look for in a yoga class for you, Phillip, is a sense of relaxation. Notice how you feel before you enter, and how you feel when you leave. Since certification credentials vary so drastically between yoga programs, I would not recommend this as a way to know if a teacher is right for you. The best way to know is to take a class with the teacher and see for yourself. Notice if the teacher has a steady personal practice too. This will become apparent the more classes you take. Remember, it is not always a matter of physical dexterity that makes a good yoga teacher, but it is also the way the postures are approached in non-violence and truthfulness. Let me know how your studies go - keep in touch!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Answering machines

Dear Joan,

I am interested in start taking yoga classes for beginners. I called your number and the recorded message said that if I wanted a schedule of classes I could contact you at your internet address. I have tried but could not see any schedule of classes. Could you please e-mail me back with a class schedule and location for the classes? Do you teach the classes yourself? I would appreciate any help you could give me . I live in the Riverside area and an Oakbrook location would be fine for me. I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you!
Sandra Dudiak
Riverside, Illinois

Dear Sandra,

All of my classes are listed in the About Joan section of this website. I personally teach all classes listed. Hope to be seeing you in one or some of them, Sandra!

**Namaste,
Joan**

A teacher

Dear Joan,

Greetings, Joan, I am presently reading your wonderful "Idiot's Guide" on yoga and cannot begin to tell you how much I am learning, and how much I am enjoying it. Along with your thorough treatment of the many aspects of yoga, what I particularly appreciate are both your down-to-earth approach to this subject and your liberal doses of humor. It is a book that I am sure to re-read numerous times over the years and glean something new each time. There are many dry, serious tomes written on yoga; your approach is truly a breath of fresh air.

began studying hatha yoga a year ago, in November 1997. I now study twice a week with Swami urudevananda of the Divine Life Society (DLS) of Maryland (her organization is headquartered in India

where she studied for many years). I also practice at home, either by myself or using some very instructive yoga videos I have found (including an excellent new one produced in India by Swami Adhyatmananda of OLS whom I had the honor of meeting at a retreat in September). I was also asked to teach a yoga class once a week at my company. I am, of course, far from being qualified to do this, but I make up in enthusiasm for what I lack in experience. It is a very informal lunchtime class for beginners and I have come to realize how much I love teaching and serving others. Swamiji speaks a great deal about karma yoga -- perhaps this is my way of expressing it. My students also seem to enjoy learning and I often have up to 10 people show up on Tuesdays. My goal is to become a certified hatha yoga instructor in the future. Like you, I want to be helpful and knowledgeable, but I also try to inject a bit of humor into my classes.

Thank you for an excellent and thoroughly enjoyable book. Blessings to you.

Namaste.
Janice
Maryland

Dear Janice,

Thank you! My co-writer Eve Adamson, and I, are two gals that like to have fun and do yoga. So we are really happy you are enjoying it too. You sound like you would be a great teacher. Perhaps I will be lucky enough to take a class with you sometime?

**Namaste,
Joan**

There is light at the end of the Carpal Tunnel

Dear Joan,

Found your web site while on a search, am 40, male, active (work construction) and have started to feel the aches and pains of 40 along with Carpo Tunnel. I thought I read somewhere that they were recommending yoga over surgery now for CT. I work out at a gym, (not as often as I should) but am looking for something I can do at the house, that will help me relax. Can a person be involved with yoga and not get tied up in the religious end of it? Any help or advice you can send will be a help.

Thanks,
Mark
Lansing, Michigan

Yoga can be very helpful for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. This agonizing condition of the wrist is caused and/or aggravated from repetitive movements of the wrist joint. What type of work do you do? Are their repetitive movements involved? I personally know of many musicians, particularly string players who have developed Carpal Tunnel from the way their bow is held. It is essential that you balance your repetitive hand movements with opposing movements of the wrist. This is where yoga can help you. Many of the postures position the hands in ways that will benefit repetitive wrist strain. Holding the pose helps to counter the strained condition so that your muscles can find a balance. Not knowing what caused your carpal tunnel, I hesitate suggesting specific postures for your condition; However, study the postures and find some that move your wrist and hold it in ways that it is not usually held. Work with this steadily. Carpal Tunnel is a condition that develops over time. So too, it will take time to balance the condition. Increase your hatha yoga practice with an experienced yoga teacher to help guide you.

Regarding the spiritual aspects of yoga study - Yoga can be what you want it to be. If the spiritual aspect of study is not appealing to you, then let it go. It need not be pursued. The spiritual aspects of yoga are not for everyone. If anyone pressures you to study in this way, please tell them to go fly a mystical kite (in non-violent winds). Everything in do time, some time, or no time - it's up to you. Enjoy your yoga.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hit those books! (non-violently)

Dear Joan,

Hi! I'm Kelly. I have a paper due in my English class, and I thought my thesis would be on yoga. No, I know nothing of it, but I figured if I was going to do 7 pages of something it might as well be something I'd like to learn. I took out a copy of your "Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga" from the library and had to return it before I could finish (finish, hell I barely started it!). Now I have to wait 3 weeks before seeing it again (or buying one). I do have some photo copies of some of the pages that I did read, but I'd like to know if you could point out the important things an inexperienced person (much like myself-hee hee) might neglect or over look. I'd appreciate it greatly! Also, while we are on the subject- why is it that when I try meditating- how do i say this?-I get this overwhelming urge to fall asleep? I'll tell ya a '5 minute close my eyes and listen to me breathing session' I'm ready to take off into dreamland. I am ready to go in 3 minutes. Thank you for all your help!!!

L.,P.,&H.(Love,Peace,and Happiness)-
Kelly Haughey,
Long Island, New York

Dear Kelly,

Ha, ha, ha. Very funny. I once was a college student too. Your letter made me happy,

Ha, ha, ha. Very funny. I once was a college student too. Your letter made me happy, but, all the same.... Get a book and read girl!!!! I can't begin to put in a nutshell of a "Yo Joan Letter" the answer to your question about the "important points." But, I do appreciate your smiles and laughter and happiness.

Now regarding meditation. Here are the stages:

Stage one: "Me, me, me..."

Stage two: "I hurt, I need to make a phone call..."

Stage three: "I'm happy, I'm sad..."

Stage four: Fall asleep.

Stage five: Disengage - not "I disengage" but simply watch as you continue to "I-ing" Our ego protects us in what we can handle - little by little more is released.

Do keep in touch, Kelly. Shanteehee.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sweet dreams

Dear Joan,

Question for you: I am suffering from a chronic case of insomnia. I wake up two to three hours after I fall asleep, and then stay up the rest of the night. I can't seem to stop my racing thoughts about work, social life, and now not being able to stay asleep.

Do you know of anyway to "extend" one's internal clock in order to remain asleep longer? Also, any tips on getting rid of nightmares? Any help would be much appreciated.

Jeff
Chicago, IL
P.S. I started reading your book to help relax my mind.

Dear Jeff,

To extend one's internal clock - meditate. A tip on getting rid of nightmares - meditate. The answer for everything - meditation. How does one learn to meditate? Take a class or read a book or simply practice, practice, practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dear Readers,

My dear brother died November 13. If you did not receive a response to your letter around this time, please do write back. I appreciate your understanding. Thank you kindly.

**Namaste,
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?
Send your questions or mail to yojoan@yoyoga.com
Please include the city and state you are from.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

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E-Mail us at: yojoan@yoyoga.com

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