

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



" The New Yoga for People Over 50"

Dear Joan,

I cannot let another day go by without thanking you for the wonderful review of my book, "The New Yoga for People Over 50", that appears on Amazon. com. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for writing it!

After I read your review a few months ago, I right away ordered your Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga--it is really lively--just great! Love your line "when it comes to yoga, idiots just don't exist..." It's a perfect book, especially for introducing teenagers to yoga--great lay out! So inviting and friendly!!!



Now I'll enjoy looking at your Yoyoga! Web site...

Happy, Healthy New Year to You!
Love and blessings,
Suza Francina

Dear Suza,

HAPPY 1999! What a great book you have written. Thank you, dear!

Namaste,
Joan

M.S.

Dear Joan,

My friend has M.S. and has taken local classes but finds it hard to get out regularly in winter months. Do you know where I can find a video of yoga for people in a wheelchair?

Thanks
Ilene Knight
Portland, Maine

Dear Ilene,

Although I do not know of any videos for what you are looking for, Check out the book "Recovery Yoga: A Practical Guide for Chronically Ill, Injured and Post-Operative People," by Sam Dworkis. There is a large focus on breathing and relaxation in it. It is an excellent book and I highly recommend it. I have given copies of it often as gifts. You may also want to contact Eric Small. He is a nationally renowned yoga teacher with MS. He can be reached by fax at (310) 276 1090. or through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Southern California Chapter at (310)479-4456. He may be able to help you further in your search for appropriate videos.

Namaste,
Joan

A Song from Sweden

Dear Joan,

I'm a guy who lives in Sweden (Yes, I'm Swedish! Small world - concerning your massage book!). I'm 30 years old, and I like hatha yoga very much. I do yoga at home by myself. I live in a quite small town and there's no yoga school here around. But it doesn't matter to me. I want to do my yoga alone. But what I really would like to have here at home is a private trainer. She could help me, encourage, guide, assist and correct me. But I won't find that either of course.

I found your web page and then I got the idea! You can be my yoga teacher on-line! Of course you don't have to write me lots of stuff all the time. I certainly NOT require that. But if I could get just one reply on this letter with some supportive words from you I think it would feel great. Just writing this letter feels like a big step for me since I do yoga all by myself, in private. But if I could have a distant cyberteacher in my mind it would be a kind of confirmation to me and my interest in yoga. And it would be very inspirational so to speak. Just to think like: She would probably have told me so now when I'm trying this, and so on... Got the idea? And then I could let you know my progress,

occasionally. Not too often I absolutely promise.

Maybe you could use these thoughts in one of your columns. Not that I want you too. But it would be fair if you somewhat could benefit on the idea too....:) Maybe getting your coming video could be a good idea for me too.

I think my yoga interest started at the age of 14 when I read about it in a magazine and also found some books at the library, for example a yoga for children-book. And I started practicing for fun. Wow, I can do that too and it feels great! But I wasn't consistent in doing it, and I have never been. I have been consistently inconsistent... There have been other interests, and work of course (Marketing.) But I've always liked yoga and admired the yogis and the postures the yogis have done.

Now I think I should try yoga a bit more regularly. As physical training but also as for just feeling sooooo good when doing yoga. The yoga traditions are fantastic and I have realized how much yoga actually could give me physically. And yoga can be done both light and easy as well as with power, depending how I feel at the moment. And I can do it for a short time or a long time. That's fine.

Hopefully I can be a bit more consistent. I want to learn more, and I want to read even more to understand in detail how to perform the asanas. If I also could put some time to do some pranayama I would be more complete. It would maybe help me to relax more when doing yoga. To me I tend to get very excited when it comes to yoga. But mustn't it be considered as a part of yoga too? In fact, the sexual energy I feel when doing yoga is very intense, but I hope this is the case for many others too... In fact, this seems sometimes to be the purpose or at least a result of yoga...

But just the feeling that I actually can do the same poses that the real good yogis can do is amazing. Even if I don't reach as far as they do. But sometimes when I realize that the person on that picture in the book could be myself it feels great.

When doing yoga I slip into my lycra unitard/catsuit with long sleeves and long legs and I almost feel like slipping into another world", I almost wrote... Well, maybe not... But I think: this is my time, unique time, enjoy it! The special clothing is extra inspiring and helps me feel this is a special time, and I concentrate more.

As for props I only use my favorite blanket and sometimes one or two pillows. And a wall when doing the headstand (sirshasana) (The universal names of the postures are actually unique too, exactly like the latin names on flowers. Even though Swedish is my first language we can understand each other...)

I've just got a simple timer too. It's really useful: Imagine that a minute can really be both long, tough, difficult and painful. But at the same time overwhelmingly wonderful when I "endured" that minute and I know that I have made it! Another prop I sometimes have come to use (maybe an idea to try for you) is a rubber band or actually a rubber inner tube made for ordinary bicycle tires. It works as a smooth flexible strap which sometimes helps me to hold a position. Cheap too.

I like to do various asanas. Two favorites right now are the bound lotus and the asana when lying on my back with both feet behind my head. Naturally it's more fun to do front bends since I do them a bit better than backbends. So I should practice more backbends, I know. Another asana is for example uddiyana-bandha. I can do it well, but it's so intense so I'm not doing it often. But again: I think it looks great on pictures and I know that I can do it! I also hope to perform better some asanas which requires strength and balance, for example Mayurasana. Again: Focus and concentration! And again: There is so much wonderful to achieve and to work for.

Please Joan, I would love some encouraging words from the world's best tutor: YOU!

(Blandishments, I know)

est of luck for 1999!

Sweden

And I've just practiced my English too. Sorry for any grammar mistakes. A technical question too: Do you have an ftp archive for the asanas for the week that already have been published on your home page?

Dear L,

Hello there!!! Thanks for a thorough and beautifully stated letter! Of course you have my encouragement - Go Guy, Go Guy, GO GUY!!! You are doing mighty fine and keep up the beautiful work. Your letter has also given many wonderful tips to readers out there who are also studying at home. I would be quite happy to help tutor you through your access of this website. If ever you have a question, just drop a line to me at "Yo Joan." There will probably be other yogis out there with similiar questions, so I will post your questions so others will also benefit Your above letter on yoga is so wonderfully enthusiastic and sincere - and this is what yoga study is all about! This is a great letter for this new 1999 issue. Thank you, L! Regarding your question on the archive, I do not have an archive of this site, other than the small book I recently put together of past "Yo Joan!" letters.

Remember, L, I am in your corner - even if that corner is in cyberspace.

**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.**

**[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)**

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



A cold shoulder

Dear Joan,

I injured my shoulder while riding (falling from) my motorcycle. My doctor diagnosed me with bursitis. She suggested a cortisone shot, which I am not eager to have. She also told me that I should keep moving the shoulder so I do not end up with "frozen shoulder".



I have your book "the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga". Could you suggest an exercise that will keep my shoulder mobile without further injuring it?

Thank you,
Pauline
Buckfield, ME

Dear Pauline,

First of all, I suggest getting "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage," another book available in the [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) that Eve Adamson and I wrote, to help with that frozen shoulder. The combination of active yoga movements and passive massage movements are a perfect marriage for helping your shoulder. I would not presume to contradict your doctor's suggestion - but I completely understand your not being eager for a cortisone shot. Downward Facing Dog ([Asana For The Week](#)) is an excellent posture to help free up shoulders. Start by simply standing next to a wall, facing it, and placing your hands at shoulder height against the wall. Now, take a large step back and bend at the hips forward. Hang here with a flat back for as long as you comfortably can. As soon as you feel any type of pain, come out of the pose. This is a form of downward dog pose to help you gradually open the shoulders without the full weight of your body upon them.

Namaste,
Joan

Delicate ankles

Dear Joan,

Happy New Year, Joan!

Thank you for answering my last questions. I'll try not to monopolize your time, but I have a few more, if you could possibly help me out. Thanks in advance!

First of all, I cannot do the Lotus Pose. My hips are very open, but my ankles are incredibly painful in this pose. I can get into it (uncomfortably) with my right foot on top, and not at all with my left foot on top. Are there certain strengthening exercises I can do for my ankles, which have always been a problem? Will my ankles strengthen with time if I just keep trying?

Secondly, my shoulders or chest must be very tight, because I cannot get my hands together in Gomukhasana. They are not even close!! Should I use a strap? How do I open this area up? Will I ever be able to do this??

Thank you for your attention. I know that I should be patient, but these seem like sort of basic poses, and it's frustrating to be so far away from being able to do them.

Thanks-
Cheryl
Erie, PA

Dear Cheryl,

First of all, standing poses strengthen the ankles. Try working more with Lightning Bolt, Warriors, etc. Once the ankles are strong, then work with Lotus Pose. Lotus Pose is an advanced pose that should only be done after your ankles are strong. It does not strengthen your ankles - in fact, Lotus Pose can hurt your ankles if they are not strong enough. Explore your reasons for wanting to do Lotus Pose in the first place. Once your ankles are strong and your reasons are not stemmed in competition, you are ready to attempt this pose.

Regarding Cow Pose (Gomukhasana), yes, use a strap to help your shoulders open up. Every body is different, so I can not tell if you will ever be able to bring the arms comfortably together. Since we all have such an incredible capacity for change, I am not sure I could ever make that kind of prediction for anyone!

It is very difficult to realize that the "end result" of a pose is not the essence of the pose.

The nectar or essence of the pose, is the peace of mind that comes in the process of studying the pose. SO, whether or not your hands touch is really not yoga, it is the comfort and understanding you find in the process along the way. I can assure you that if you can not find a sense of comfort in the pose without the hands touching, you will not find comfort once the hands come together either. My encouragement to you, Cheryl, would be to bless our beautiful arms or legs everytime you attempt a pose, and you will be amazed at how they will respond to your gentle, loving encouragement.

Namaste,
Joan

Wo, Wo, Wo...feelings...

Dear Joan,

I'm curious about emotional reactions while doing yoga asanas. I do yoga at home by audio tape and I concentrate on my breath and on the postures and trying to find balance and relaxation, perhaps meditation, at times when I feel up to it. I've heard some people talk about how when they do postures, they have emotional responses i.e. sadness, anger, sexual, happiness. I usually don't feel anything. Like I said, I just try to concentrate on my breath and the pose. Does this mean that I'm doing the poses incorrectly? What do these reaction imply? What is happening when they occur? I know it's got something to do with energy flowing through our various chakras, but I'm puzzled about why only some people experience this.

Namaste
Julie
Toronto, Canada

Dear Julie,

Not everyone reacts emotionally to the yoga poses. Some people definitely do. On a simple physiological level, if your body is closed for some time and then it begins to open, floods of nourishment or toxins can now release. These can sometimes manifest as emotions. For example, someone who has consistently walked hunched over, protecting the heart and chest, may have a profound experience while in a supported spinal twist. In this pose, the chest is held open for an extended period of time. Emotions may spring forth from just having the new experience of an open chest. The venus chakra, located in this area, is the seat of compassion and love. For the opposite effect - Look what happens in the road rage of traffic! There are a lot of mighty tight chests out there! Our body can respond positively or negatively to its positioning. The benefit of the yoga poses (one of many) is that they allow us to be with a pose for an extended period of time. By holding a pose, we can fully realize the profound experience that awareness offers us.

There is a wonderful yoga book out called "Relax and Renew." It covers many yoga poses that can be done in supported ways with blankets. It is a great book and I highly recommend it. I suggest working with supported poses, Julie. By holding the poses supported for longer periods of time, you may find new discoveries on an emotional as

well as a physical level. Since we are all different, these openings may come as floodgates or they may be quite subtle like a gentle wave. But they will be.

namaste,
Joan

Don't throw the key away...

Dear Joan,

I just purchased the Idiot's Guide to Yoga and I really enjoy it. I have been practicing yoga for almost 2 years now. I am having a hard time finding an instructor and having a few questions answered. I was on your web sit and found out that you are one busy lady. I wrote a letter to the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center in Venice a few weeks ago, but I never got a response. I have their book, Yoga Mind and Body. It is my favorite for postures. Your book is so easy to read and is helping me out a great deal. I once chanted with an instructor and I felt silly and uncomfortable. That was a year ago and I have come a long way , I think. Our chemistry wasn't right either, and I think that had something to do with my feeling awkward.

Anyway, I do have a few questions. I am very limber and perhaps are over doing the postures, because I have since noticed aches and pains that previously weren't there. My back will feel pinched and my shoulders ache, especially at night. Oh, you probably can't diagnose anything from this, I'll just stick to one question. Are you supposed to lock your knees? None of my books come out and say yes or no and my instructors have favored toward yes. I was always told to not lock my knees, in karate, dance, etc.. What do you say? I hope I hear from you, but if not, I am a better yogi because of your book and I greatly appreciate your efforts.

namaste,
julie

Dear Julie,

Surprise, Julie! You are hearing from me!! And I respond to all people who write me, so know that you always have this avenue for your yoga questions. I would suggest not locking your knees. Rather focus on your quadricep muscles above the knees and think in terms of lifting the quadriceps. As your quadriceps strengthen, so will your knees. If a body part is locked, it is breakable. Yoga is about remaining flexible. Regarding your aches and pains, perhaps you are pushing yourself too far? Go gradually into the poses. In time your flexibility will return. No need to rush. You will get there soon enough.

Namaste,
Joan

weeks, 8 chakras...hmmmm

Dear Joan,

Hi Joan, I bought your book about 8wks ago and finally pulled it off the shelf last night, I stayed up for a couple of hours reading. This morning I began reading again and am halfway to the end. I signed up for Dr. Weil's 8wk program over the net and remembered reading in his book that he highly recommended Yoga. I am a 44 year old woman, mother of two, step-mom of two, wife, daughter, sister, friend, scorekeeper at school for basketball, self employed (Crown and Bridge Dental Laboratory), and am 5'6" about 240lbs. I have combatted alcoholism (20 years), Stopped smoking (7 years) . Now I am trying to take care of me, in a different way. I used to go out and walk 3-5 miles a day. Now I only think about it. Your book has given me a lot to think about, I am conscious of my breathing again and I guess that's a start.

I live in New Hampshire and wondered if you have a list of instructors in the immediate area, or suggestions on how to find someone that teaches Hatha Yoga? The past two days I have been drinking herbal tea and green tea, using stevia liquid instead of sugar, and am trying to stay away from meat. I spend so much time at home working that I don't take care of me. Now that I have the computer and am on line, Maybe I have a network that will work for me, shall I say that I will use for me.

Thank you and Eve for your "Idiots Guide to Yoga" (I knew by the title that it would be easy to understand).

Peacefully,
Thelma
Barnstead, New Hampshire

Dear Thelma,

**Your letter is inspiring. Keep in touch, and tell me how Dr. Weil's 8 weeks worked for you. I have yet to read the book, but I plan to soon. From what I have heard, those 8 weeks are mighty fine!. I don't really know where Barnstead is, but here are some teachers in New Hampshire that may be able to help you or direct you to closer yoga resources:
Doreen Schweizer 603-448-1706,
Rosemary Clough 603-886-7308,
Valerie Butler 603-673-5595.**

Hope you find these references helpful! Let me know!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Write on!

Dear Joan,

I thought you might like to know how much you have encouraged me. I wrote and you sweetly answered last summer; that was just the start. Since that time I have enjoyed using your "Breathworks" tape, read "The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga", (the library still doesn't have it) and tonight attended my first yoga class. These have all been positive nourishing experiences. I wish I could report that my tinnitus is gone, happily it's better much of the time. The tinnitus like my many other physical problems didn't develop overnight, I now have hope for greater improvement. I know I have a long road ahead of me. I hope to enjoy the journey and reach the best destination which as yet is a mystery.

Sincerely:
Sharie
Rootstown, Ohio

Dear Sharie,

Thank you, Sharie. Your letter inspires me to keep on writing.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Let's go Dutch!

Dear Joan,

I'd like to order some of your cassettes on yoga and meditation. I am English and I live in the Netherlands. I do go to a yoga class, but it's all in Dutch and I'd really like to have some tapes in English so that I can concentrate on the meditations and movements rather than asking myself all the time "What does that word mean?". Because ordering cassettes will involve shipping overseas, could you please let me know what extra costs will be involved, over and above the costs mentioned on your ordering page.

Thanks for your great book (The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga - my husband bought it for me for Christmas and I love it - your explanations of the philosophy are really clear. It made me realize just how much I'd missed in my classes by not speaking Dutch!)

Best wishes
, Maggie
Netherlands

Dear Maggie,

As noted on the order form in the book, just add an additional \$5.00 for shipping and handling and that should cover all overseas expenses. Thank you for your kind letter.

Namaste,
Joan

Illinois certification

Dear Joan,

I spoke with you briefly last Monday morning at COD, your 10:00a.m. class. I have been studying yoga for about 2 years, mostly by video but occasionally I've been able to take a few classes. I am a fitness instructor for Central DuPage Hospital and I've also had the opportunity to take yoga workshops that are offered at fitness conventions.

I have gradually started to incorporate some asanas into the end of my classes to stretch, strengthen, relax, and, hopefully, bring a little "mindfulness" to my participants. I most definitely want to become certified, and would like some guidance. Any information you can provide would be welcome. Do you ever offer training workshops for people who are working toward certification? I am not really interested in "power yoga", I prefer a more traditional, reflective approach.

I enjoy your class, Joan, and the website is wonderful!

Namaste,
Lorrie
Wheaton, Il

Dear Lorrie,

Thank you, Lorrie! I would highly recommend the "Temple of Kriya Yoga" in Chicago. They have a certification program that begins every September. It is well worth the tuition. I truly loved the program when I took it in 1993. Although it is now only 6 months long, and when I took it it was 14 months, I still believe the program to be an excellent one. I do not offer any training workshops, but, hey, you are giving me ideas!:)

Namaste,
Joan

Books are grand

Dear Joan,

Hello, I want to say thank you for the wonderful book you have written. My name is Anna Polyakova. I am a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Ohio, I study polymers. I came in US 5 years ago from the Ukraine. I started doing yoga two years ago. I used to have a regular practice with yoga teacher for one year. Now I don't have a car so I don't have the opportunity to do yoga with a group. I would appreciate any comment you may have about this.

Thank you in advance.
Anna
Ohio

Dear Anna,

My comment is to continue your practice through books and tapes. Continue studying in a disciplined way. Yoga requires discipline of practice. Some people need a class to reinforce the discipline. Since you do not have this option, tune in to this website as often as you can. I will gladly be your cyberteacher.

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.**

**[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)**

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



A new life

Dear Joan,

A very, very big thank you. The audio tapes I ordered only last week arrived on Friday. I have actually listened to all three of them. On Friday evening I did the relaxation tape, on Saturday I did the yoga tape with my two children (aged 5 and 7) and they loved it too (especially the animal poses) and then last night I did the Breathworks. It is so great to hear all this in English!!!



I started yoga in September. I'd been suffering from a bad back and had been in pain for over a year. Also last year my father died and shortly after this I started suffering from a viral form of vertigo. In the beginning, before this was diagnosed, doctors were saying it was MS or ME or even a brain tumor. One day, when I was really down, I decided to try something "alternative" (being by this point sick of doctors) and I was looking through the phone book and I found the number of Ricky, who is now my yoga teacher. Since starting yoga in September I feel like I'm a different person - less pain, no dizziness and mentally I feel great too. As I said before, all the lessons are in Dutch, and because I'm English I find that difficult. Then in the Christmas holidays we went back to England for a visit and my husband found your book which he bought for me for Christmas, and now I have your tapes too. Suddenly I can concentrate on the yoga, rather than the language! I'm so glad I found you!!! I truly think all the year of pain was meant to be - it's brought me to yoga, which has truly given me a new life.

Thank you so much.
With best wishes,
Maggie
The Netherlands

Dear Maggie,

Funny how pain can lead us to deeper understandings...and even to bliss. See if you can pick up the March issue of the magazine "Yoga International. " It is a magazine worth subscribing to - Phone (570) 253-4929. Anyway, this month has some really wonderful essays on various approaches to healing. Thank you, Maggie, for sharing the path you blazed on your road to optimum health.

**Namaste,
Joan**

New student needs help

Dear Joan,

I discovered yoga about three months ago, and I absolutely love it. Reading the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga was a great resource, by the way. I love yoga because I can see the improvement in my body and mind as each day goes by.

I know that the flexibility, strength and concentration to do the asanas will come in time and with practice, but I seem to be stymied in one area -- my right hip. I seem to be much more flexible in my left hip than my right, and when sitting in butterfly pose I can't get my knee to the ground at all!! I've been trying for three months and nothing works, it's still at the pose it always has been.

As you can guess, this makes the lotus pose virtually impossible for me. I can't get my right foot onto my left thigh to save my life. My right knee sticks up in the air no matter what I do. I have more success with the left leg, but I know I'm not supposed to favor it so much over the other. What am I doing? Or what can I do to loosen that right hip?

Thank you very much for your time,
Barbara Schwartz
Oklahoma City, OK.

Dear Barbara,

First of all, lotus pose is not for everyone. It does not necessitate enlightenment. It is simply one more extension of the body to explore finding comfort in. How do you feel in easy pose? Is the right hip still more uncomfortable than the left?

Hatha is broken down into two words...Ha is the solar or male energy and tha is the lunar or female energy. Ha is related to the right side of the body and tha is related to the left. The physical nature on the right side and the emotional nature on the left. How are the physical and emotional aspects of your life balanced? A look at how difficult one side is to the next may be looked at in terms of how the physical self is balanced with the emotional self. Are you over extended physically? Are your physical ways competitive? Are you neglecting the emotional aspects of your nature? These are simply questions to explore in your ever expanding look at your complete self.

And, if this answer does not satisfy your longing for lotus pose, I would additionally suggest working more with butterfly (cobblers) pose and one legged forward bends to help further open the hips.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A pain in the neck

Dear Joan,

I have recently had some surgery (an open thoracotomy and lobectomy) which seems to have aggregated an old injury to my neck. A chiropractor recently told me I have developed arthritis as a result of a trauma to the C-5 disc in my neck that happened 15-20 years. I have had pain from time to time in the past but always thought it was from stress. The pain has never been as bad as it is now.

Can you suggest any yoga poses or stretches that I can do that would benefit my aching neck. Once the inflammation goes down, I would especially like to give a special effort to a daily maintenance program to keep my neck and spine more flexible. Also, is it a good idea to exercise the neck while there seems to be some inflammation. I would really appreciate any suggestions you can give me.

I have taken a couple of your classes, which I have thoroughly enjoyed, along with reading the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga". I am looking forward to purchasing the "Complete Idiot Guide to Meditation". Your positive attitude and calm effect on the class always made that hour go by so fast.

Ann
Woodridge, IL

Dear Ann,

Do not exercise the neck if it is swollen or inflamed. Continue your exercise program under your doctor's supervision. Many of the yoga postures are wonderful for strengthening the neck and increasing the flexibility there, but under no circumstances would I recommend any poses if the area is inflamed. Ask your doctor for guidance. Educate him or her on the yoga postures and see what his or her opinion is in relation to your condition. Above all, I would recommend rest and patience for you. In the meantime, a steady practice of breathing exercises (pranayama) would be most helpful. Check out the chapter on this in your CIG to Yoga book for numerous specific exercises. Do these exercises when you are alone, relaxed and unpressured. Turn off the lights. Turn within.

Hope to see you in class again soon, Ann.:)

**√amaste,
Joan**

2/1/99

Happiness abounds

Dear Joan,

I was interested in yoga and I read different books to understand and learn yoga, but the only book that I actually enjoyed reading was your "idiots" guide. Now I am hooked on yoga and I do it every day. I have noticed that doing yoga gives me more energy. I have also noticed that I have been happier since I started yoga.

Thank you.
Erik
MN

Dear Erik,

And gee, your letter made me happier too! Thanks for giving.:)

**Namaste,
Joan**

A weighty subject

Dear Joan,

I am inspired by your book ("Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga") and I hope to take a class from you some day. I was first introduced to yoga ten years ago by taking a beginner's course and I loved it! Unfortunately, I didn't keep it up, but now I am starting over again by developing my own yoga program (thanks to your book!) and doing the poses in the privacy of my own home and at a time that is convenient for me. I would like to lose about thirty pounds and my question to you is if doing yoga is sufficient exercise to lose weight by itself or do I need to incorporate other types of exercise. Just to let you know, I get bored in aerobics classes! I would appreciate your comments/advice on losing weight. I'm sure many of your readers would like to know, too!!

Sincerely,
Deborah Grandys
Chicago, IL

2/1/99

Dear Deborah,

Weight is a difficult issue. So many possibilities are worth exploring. Perhaps its genetics, or one's metabolism, or emotional imbalances, or perceptions....the list goes on and on. First, self-study is required to find out what the main reason is for one's condition. Once this reason is found, an awareness develops as to how to deal with it. Where do your overweight issues stem from? Is it physical, emotional, spiritual....perhaps all? Usually one area requires more balancing than the others. Counseling can be quite effective. A steady practice of hatha yoga can also be quite effective in finding a comfort and acceptance in one's body. Some practices, like Astanga Yoga, can be quite heat producing and aerobic; however, I would not recommend this style of yoga if you are significantly out of shape. Let's now explore what "out of shape" means. What does this mean to you? Is it that you do not measure up to the latest issue of the latest fashion magazine (where even the models do not measure up and are air brushed), or is your health suffering, or are you in a state of depression that is hard to get out of? What exactly does out of shape mean?

Yoga IS sufficient exercise for a healthy life style. It is not an overnight fix to weight reduction. It is not goal orientated. If loosing weight is what you desire, I would suggest another form of exercise in addition to your hatha yoga practice. Yoga will help you to balance the body and mind, and in time, you may find you do not need to loose any weight.

Namaste,
Joan

Words to live by

Dear Joan,

I attend your 10:00, Monday and Wednesday, Hatha Yoga One class at COD and I'd like you to know how pleased I am to be part of it. It's kind of like 'the icing on the cake' for me as I'm a 2nd degree, Usui method, Reiki practitioner and the similarities in the principles of both Yoga and Reiki are wonderfully harmonious. Your class is fortifying my belief in the truth of positive energy. I firmly believe in the karmic value of positive thinking and actions. The exercises you teach strengthen those qualities for me.

I'd like to share with you the Reiki Principles. They too are words to live by and are made stronger by what I'm learning in your class. They are as follows:

- 1) Just for today I will give thanks for my many blessings.
- 2) Just for today I will not worry.
- 3) Just for today I will not be angry.
- 4) Just for today I will do my work honestly.
- 5) Just for today I will be kind to my neighbor and every living thing.

Thanks for you dedication to teaching Yoga.

Yours in Universal Energy,
Carol Wolverton
Elm Ellyn, IL

Dear Carol,

Thank you, Carol, for sharing these great thoughts to live by

**Namaste,
Joan**

Thundering Thunderbolts

Dear Joan,

You were kind enough to respond to me a while ago about yoga for those of us who are not slim. (at my old e-mail address). I am still looking for a teacher here in Bucks Country, PA who is really tuned into my needs, and still hope to someday perhaps teach yoga for "women of substance!" Most people in my classes are younger and thinner, which mostly doesn't bother me, but sometimes I'd like a custom-tailored class.

I have another question, however: I cannot sit on my feet in thunderbolt pose (vajrasana). I am fairly flexible otherwise, but this hurts my ankles, my knees, the tops of my feet, and my shins!!! I usually just use easy pose instead, but sometimes it is awkward when everyone else seems to find this so easy! Is there some way to 'work up' to doing this? Or anything else about it I should know?

Thanks.
Janna Walsh
Bucks Country, PA

PS: If anyone out there is looking for great yoga-wear for larger women (including a fabulous full-length unitard which is simply the best thing I own to do yoga in), I suggest Junonia, a company which sells great active wear of all kinds for larger women. They have a catalog and a web site.

Dear Janna,

Hey! Thanks for the tip for larger women! I have been so busy trying all the bread recipes in the Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest that I think I will definitely check this web site out!

Now, regarding that thundering thunderbolt... I suggest exploring your feelings as you sit in easy pose in class as others are in thunderbolt. Watch your emotions as they range from anger, to sadness, to intimidation, to joy. Watch as your emotions jump around. Observe your emotions without judging or becoming attached to them. The point of yoga is to become grounded in the physical vehicle (body) we are given so as to effectively direct this vehicle in harmonious and inspiring ways. Eventually we can do the same for he mind.

You may also explore using old phone books for this pose. Since it is difficult lugging a heavy phone book to class, I suggest working with this at home. Sit back on the large phone book (You may stack up as many phone books as you need to feel comfortable.) The phone book is placed between the legs as you kneel and sit back, so the feet are approximately a foot apart to accommodate the phone book. Each day rip out one page....simply one page. Be patient. What's the hurry? Slowly, assuredly, you will lengthen the quadriceps and find lightening bolt enlightening.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Eve's In Iowa!

Dear Joan,

I have your book "The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga". The other author that helped you write it is Eve Adamson, and the book says she is a resident of Florida, and went to the University of Florida, and I happen to live right near it. I was just wondering if she gave lessons in Gainesville (where the university is), because I want a really down to earth teacher, and I'm sure she can fit that description.

Thank you ever so much,
Lauren M. Davis
Gainesville, Florida

Dear Lauren,

Eve sure does fit that description. I absolutely love her and I know you would too. However, she has recently moved to her hometown of Iowa City, Iowa. Those lucky Iowans!!!

**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.**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Current Classes

Dear Joan,

I found your number in the yellow pages, called and got your WEB address. I was wondering if you teach classes out side of COD. Those mes are not very convenient.

Regards
Kasu Sista



Dear Kasu,

Sorry, Kasu. These are my only current classes. I do teach occasional one-day seminars for various organizations. Hope to have more of a variety for you in the millennium.

Namaste,
Joan

Child care and yoga

Dear Joan,

ello.....I live in Naperville and I am seeking a yoga class in the western suburbs that meets in the 12:30...

to...2:00pm time range. The places I have called all meet in the morning or evening. My children are in school in the afternoon, and I don't want them at a sitter while I yoga!!! Or, do you know of a morning class that offers parent/child instruction??? My 5 year old son would love it!! I would be willing to join a health club if that is what is needed to fit in with my time constraint.

Thank you so much!!!!

Dear ?,

I used to teach yoga at an Athletic Center in Naperville called "Central Park" on Naperville Road (630-505-7799). I believe yoga classes are still taught there. They also offer child care services. College of Dupage has a wonderful child care department where students who are majoring in child care attend to the children. You may want to also check this out(630-858-2800). Best wishes!

**Namaste,
Joan**

More, More!

Dear Joan,

Hello, I'm a yoga teacher in mitchell, sd & would like more info on your teachings.

Mary lou

Dear Mary lou,

Is sd for South Dakota? Regarding more on my teachings, this regularly updated website is a good start. To quote Rumi, "Last night I asked an old wise man to tell me all the secrets of the universe. He murmured slowly in my ear, ' This cannot be told, but only learned.'" What else can I possibly say?

**Namaste,
Joan**

Teacher hunting

Dear Joan,

I live in Jacksonville, Florida. I am almost finished reading your book and am eager to take a yoga class. I tried looking in the phone book, but could not find any listings relating to yoga. I have passed a small local business which has yoga listed as one of their offerings, but have been hesitant to stop. I would like to know if you could recommend someone in this neck of the woods who I could contact for more information. I have browsed other yoga books and posture sheets, but have not found them stimulating enough. Your book has been wonderful, yet I still feel that a class would encourage me to become more disciplined. Any advice or information you may have would be greatly appreciated.

Namaste
Jennifer Cherry
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Jennifer,

I don't really know teachers in your neck of the woods, but I looked up listings in Yoga International's Yoga Teachers Guide for 1999. There is one yoga teacher listed in this directory who is in Jacksonville: Laurie Brown of Heart Centered Yoga, Phone - 904-724-5173. Best wishes to you, Jennifer, in your joyful journey to find the right teacher.

Namaste,
Joan

'Playin' with a full deck

Dear Joan,

I'm looking for a set of asana cards, each with a different pose (pictures and written descriptions), so as to be able to selectively "create" my own workout. I've only seen a set of these one time, and I'm afraid I didn't get all the information at the time. I'd appreciate any help you could give me in this search.

Thanks,
Beth
Front Royal, Virginia

Dear Beth,

Iyengar Yoga Institute offers a great set of asana cards with audio tapes for pronunciations of sanskrit terms. Call (415) 753-0909 in San Francisco to order.

Namaste,
Joan

The shell of understanding

Dear Joan,

I am a twenty-nine year old male. I recently went to the doctor and found out I am approximately 70 pounds over weight. (Like I needed the doctor to tell me that.) He informed me that I need an exercise program that burns fat. Also, I have worked in a warehouse for many years and now I experience chronic back pain. Although I am no longer a warehouseman, as a professor I have to stand for extended periods of time and of course my back begins to hurt. I think yoga would be an ideal exercise program for me, but I have a couple of questions. I know yoga can help with back pain but can I burn fat by doing yoga postures? Also, how many calories can be burned by doing yoga for 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or 60 minutes?

Thank you for your time.
Brian Jones
Petersburg, Virginia

P.S. I was hoping that you could give me a response quickly, because I am interested in getting started as soon as possible. I am not trying to rush you or anything but the quicker I get started the sooner I can enjoy the benefits that yoga can offer. I have already purchased *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga* and I am eager to get started. If I have to wait for your response that is okay. I am going to start anyway because I do know about the benefits in terms of back pain, meditation, and stress reduction. I hope to hear from you soon. Thanks.

Dear Brian,

Is a next day response soon enough? Yoga is a system of health care that involves the entire body/mind experience. Are you ready to explore the issues surrounding your weight gain? The weight gain did not happen overnight, and neither will the loss. It sounds like you are ready to make the weight changes right now. The study of the hatha yoga postures is not a study of burning calories, it is a study of burning karma (though I suspect for many this may appear as one and the same). If you are looking for a quick way to loose weight, I would suggest joining a health club. If you are looking for some deep cleansing changes, I would suggest getting yourself into a disciplined yoga program with a qualified yoga teacher as soon as possible.

First of all, stop drinking caffeine and sugary foods that get you real high real fast. The extreme highs inevitably are followed by extreme lows - obviously not conducive to a balanced approach to weight loss. Addictions are not easy to break; whether these addictions are coffee, food, cigarettes, gossip, etc. Karmic patterns keep us on a constant circle. It is difficult to break a circle and go to another level of understanding. Breaking a pattern can be quite painful, very scary, lonely, and ultimately enlightening. As Khalil Gibran so eloquently said, "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding." Are you willing to face the pain that your shell encloses? Yoga involves introspection, self-study, discipline, and hard work. This self study can uncover veils to a deeper understanding of reality. I hope to encourage you, Brian, into exploring your weight issues more deeply. Take yoga classes. Get closer to your body before you try to quickly remove it through weight loss. Understand and get closer to the painful reasons for the weight gain before you dismiss it. A quick fix is superficial. You

are not superficial. You are profoundly more than this. You are profoundly more than your extra pounds. The answers to your weight loss are to be found through a deep inner awareness. Don't be deceived by outer illusions that take you away from the inner reality. Find a yoga teacher. Study. Study. Study. Bring the focus inward. This is extremely difficult when "fat is where it's at." I encourage you to meet this inner challenge. Joy is truly found when inward we are bound.

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.

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Yoga For Beginners

Yo Joan,

I recently bought your new book, "The complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation." I'm about half way through reading it and I think it is great, the best book on meditation I have read. I was going to order your meditation tape from the back of the book and I noticed you also have an audio tape called "Yoga at the Beach". I already have your tape "Beginning Yoga with Joan" which I really like and I wanted to know some more about this other tape. I couldn't find it listed on your web page. Also, I was wondering when your video tape was going to be finished; I'm eagerly waiting for it.



Ede
Nashua, NH
My web site is called "Yoga for Beginners" and the address is:
<http://www.mv.com/ipusers/howell/ejh/>

Ede dear,

And "Yoga for Beginners" is a mighty fine site! I checked it out - very clear and informative! Thanks, Ede. You are one of the first letters I am receiving on the "CIG to Meditation" book that just came out. The tape "Yoga at the Beach" is currently only available through the meditation book. I will soon also be bringing it to the Yoyoga Bookstore on the web. It was recorded last summer on the shores of Lake Michigan. It was a balmy beautiful clear day and I was all alone on the beach. I was truly inspired by the beauty around me. The tape consists of breathing exercises, headstand instruction, some standing poses, and some seated poses. I hope you will enjoy the tape as much as I enjoyed recording it.

The new video in the Yoyoga Bookstore is "My Swedish Massage with Joan." It is a tape that features video instruction of many of the massage strokes featured in "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage." I do not have a yoga video out yet for sale. I am shy:) I did do a series of seven video tapes for the College of Dupage in Glen Ellyn called "Yoga with Joan." These tapes are only available through the college library. So, if ever you are out this way, Ede, I'll let you use my library card!

**Namaste,
Joan**

New York, New York!

Yo Joan,

I am a 20 yr old college student. I have heard much about yoga and meditation, but have never really explored the field. I was at a bookstore one day and started reading your CIG to Yoga. I really got into the book and ended up purchasing it a week later. I have read the whole book and I have a whole new outlook on life. My boyfriend bought me the CIG to Meditation and I've just started reading that. I very often get headaches that end up turning into migraines. I feel as now that there is a more hopeful way of looking into the future with this. I live in New Jersey and I am looking into taking a yoga class this spring in Greenwich Village, NY. Anyplace you know of out there you can recommend? Thanks for all your help!

Sincerely,
Becky Wieladek
North Arlington, NJ

Becky dear,

Many yoga studios and classes exist in NYC. An assortment of teaching styles also exist. Just open up the phone book under "yoga" and WOW! As you mentioned headaches are a concern for you, I would highly recommend a class with a strong focus on breathing. See if you can find any classes in Kundalini Yoga. These type of classes usually strongly emphasize breath work. All yoga classes though, do involve breathwork. Find a teacher that spends a majority of class time on this breath focus.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Form and Alignment

Yo Joan,

I am looking for a book called Form and Alignment or Form and Prop by Bobby Clennell. Do you know where I could get it? I am taking an Iyengar class and I hear this book shows how to use all the props.

Thanks, Kim

Kim dear,

Try yoga.com on the web. I'm sure you'll come across it.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sydney Australia

Yo Joan,

Yo Joan, bought the idiot's guide yesterday - read it & love it, inspired to practice out on my east facing deck with my 4 year old at 6:30am today(which is probably still tomorrow for you guys in the US), motivational stuff. Checked out the website too, having surfed through many over the past few weeks, yours certainly shines brightly. I teach prenatal yoga here in Sydney, and am wanting to network worldwide on the net with other prenatal teachers - any contacts up your sleeves would be honorably and gratefully received. It's hot and humid here, and the kids and I have just returned from the surf (wet stuff not cyber). I am still feeling all tight skinned from salt. My husband is over your way now and tells me the weather is not too fabulous. Love the humor in your work. sunshine beaming over to you from Sydney.

Namaste,
Joanna Dadd

Joanna dear,

Thank you, mate! Don't really know anyone else in Australia, but here are two Australian yoga contacts on the web...www.YogaMagik.com and www.space.net.au/~astanga. Do keep in touch...perhaps I will have the honor of taking a class with you someday, Joanna.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Forms of Yoga Study

Yo Joan,

Namaste Joan, I am looking for sources (books, videos, etc.) on Ishta yoga. Can you give any suggestions? Also, I have been told about the Phoenix Rising yoga program, but my source did not know a great deal about it. Can you explain this program a bit?

Thanks very much!

Namaste,
Susanna Luthy
New Carlisle, IN

Susanna dear,

I do not know about Ishta Yoga. "Ishta-devata" means centering on the divine, so I assume this style of yoga study is devotional in focus. Regarding Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, it is a study of yoga dynamics between a "yoga therapist" and a person receiving the therapy or "client." The trained therapist takes the client through an experience of various supported yoga postures. The person receiving the therapy is encouraged to slowly open in these supported postures in an atmosphere of support and nurturance. From what I have personally experienced and seen, I think this therapy is very effective and I highly recommend it. I also read Michael Lee's book, "Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, A bridge from body to soul" and I highly recommend it too. It is filled with personal exercises that I found very worthwhile. It can be purchased through major book stores or through the amazon.com link in the Yoyoga Bookstore

**Namaste,
Joan**

Retreat and Renew!

Yo Joan,

Just bought your book "Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation" and it's great! Very easy to understand. I've been looking for this kind of book for a while. I live in Long Island, NY and I recently found out about Sivananda Yoga Ranch in upstate NY. I'm not sure if you ever heard of the Sivananda Yoga retreats but they are all over the world. I'm thinking about visiting this one on my next break from school and I was wondering, first, if you have an opinion about these retreats or, if you never heard of it, perhaps some advice to a fairly newcomer to yoga on how long I should stay to benefit the most from such a place (Is one week a good time period?) The daily schedule includes two 2-hour yoga classes plus two 2-hour meditation, chanting, talks. Any other retreats you know of that are good? Thank you in advance.

Namaste,
Sacha
Long Island, NY

Sacha dear,

My opinion is that the Sivananda retreats are FANTASTIC. I have been on many retreats to the Grass Valley location in Northern California. I have often gone alone. I can not begin to describe how important these retreats have been for me. I will continue them. It is truly a holistic experience. I highly encourage you to go on the retreat. I highly encourage you to go on many retreats. In our fast paced world, we rarely get chances to live in a ways that are healthy to the planet, to ourselves, and to those around us. These yoga retreat centers give us an opportunity to live in a holistically healthy way and see that it is indeed possible. Keep in touch, Sacha, and let me know your experience of your retreat.

Namaste,
Joan

Breath Meditation

Yo Joan,

I have a question about meditating by observing your breathing: Whenever I try this method, my breathing gets faster and faster or I don't breathe as deeply or easily as when I'm not concentrating on my breath. I guess just by concentrating on my breath I feel self-conscious about it and alter it. When I use other meditation methods, I notice that my breathing is very deep and smooth when I observe it. But the minute I start to concentrate on it, it gets faster and faster and not as smooth. Are there any tips you can give me so this won't happen? I want to use this meditation method because it's supposed to be the most powerful way to meditate.

Thank You,
Birdi
Sunnyvale, California

Birdi dear,

My "tip" is to continue your studies. It sounds like you are doing mighty fine. You are aware of changes that occur and this is a large part of the study. When you say your breathing gets faster and faster when you concentrate on it, this tends to make me think that your breathing is shallow. Keep your hand on your diaphragm muscle when you notice your breath quickening. Remind yourself to bring your breath lower and use the diaphragm more fully. When you are relaxed, try lying on your back with your hand on your abdomen and watch it rise and lower. Try increasing the exhale to the inhale. This de-stresses the body.

One more tip might be to count with your breaths. Count in for 4, Count out for 6. Count slow. When your breath starts to quicken. Start counting slowly. You are doing great, Birdi!

Namaste,
Joan

De-stress!

Yo Joan,

My friends and I are practicing yoga together one night a week. A few of them have lower back problems and are weary about certain postures. Would you please write back with a list of basic postures that might be harmful to the lumbar region, or possible ways of avoiding stress on the area. Also, one of the girls is concerned about her high blood pressure. Are there any postures she should avoid due to this? Thank you so much for your time Joan. Namaste.

Sincerely,
Julie Cyr
New Brunswick, Canada

Julie dear,

Forward bends can put undo strain on the lower back, particularly if your hamstrings are not flexible. Bend your knees when doing forward bends, including poses like Downward dog where your body is also bending forward. Slowly work to straighten the legs in a way that is healthy to your lower back. Patience and non-competition are keys to this practice. As you practice any of the poses, visualize the spine lengthening as if there is space between all of your vertebrae.

Regarding high blood pressure, avoid inversions or postures where the body is turned upside down. If your practice already consists of inversions, limit the amount of time you are in them. If the entire class is up in a headstand for 5 minutes that does not mean that you have to be upside down for that amount of time, or even at all. Each body is uniquely beautiful. Treasure your body as you may choose instead to rest longer in child's pose.

Namaste,
Joan

AM/PM

Yo Joan,

I am in need of your expert advice. I recently saw a video for sale called, "Living Yoga. A.M./P.M. Yoga for Beginners set" by Patricia Walden. I was wondering if you had any knowledge of this tape set, and whether you think it is a good buy, or a waste of my money. If not this tape set, are there any that you do recommend? The reason this one looked good to me was because of its short morning and evening routines, since I never seem to have the time. I would really appreciate any advice you can spare.

Namaste
Vincent
San Jose, California.

Vincent dear,

I have heard great things about these videos from students of mine. I have not seen them myself. I have seen Patricia Walden's other "Beginners Yoga" tape and I think the production and her presentation are truly beautiful and inspiring to watch.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Stiff neck

Yo Joan,

Often I find that I have a stiff neck and upper spine. Sometimes my neck gets so stiff that it causes pain and a headache. I also notice slightly less range of motion if I turn my neck to the right. Yoga has helped to improve my flexibility generally. Could you recommend some postures that might help my neck and upper spine to loosen up.

Thanks
Alison

Alison dear,

Does your practice consist of inversions? If so, you may want to ask your yoga teacher to watch and see if there is an adjustment that can be made. Inversions can cause a great deal of strain to the neck if the balance is off. Just think...you are turning all your body weight upside down and your head becomes your feet! I would recommend downward dog and cow pose as two poses that are particularly beneficial for neck and shoulder tension.

**Namaste,
Joan**

When?

Yo Joan,

What time of day is best to practice yoga? I feel much more flexible in the evening, but I enjoy the peace it brings me in the morning before I start my day. Is there a preferable time to practice? Thank you in advance or your time.

Namaste,
Erin

Erin dear,

Ultimately yoga is a state of mind and being that goes beyond classes. Hatha Yoga can be practiced beneficially at various times in the day. I prefer simple easy stretches in the morning (for I too am not very flexible then), a more rigorous practice mid day or early evening, and a quiet practice before sleep. This is according to my body clock. What is your body clock like?

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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Skip and Henry Longfellow

Yo Joan,

Found your site and this partial quote via a search engine, then couldn't find the quote it in is entirety upon arriving. Could you please forward it?
Thank you.

July 1, 1998 Issue 41 "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each man's life a sorrow and..."

Skip Longfellow
LA, CA

Dear Skip,

".....suffering enough to disarm any hostility."
-----Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Namaste,
Joan



Nicklish Tootsies!

Yo Joan,

have question about how to handle ticklish feet (or other body parts) during a massage as giver or receiver. I have a kind of a hard time and quite often get the giggles too easily when receiving massage on my legs or feet. It is not unbearable but some tips would be great.

Tim
Seattle, Washington

Dear Tim,

If the massage is of consistent firm pressure, the ticklishness should diminish with time and experience. Many people are ticklish, especially when the touch is unfamiliar and new. Ask the person giving the massage to firmly hold you for a few minutes to see if you can get some of the laughs out, then to continue with slow firm strokes. Let me know how your laughing goes!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Aching Knees

Yo Joan,

My husband, who is 58, is having problems with aching knees. Which poses would you suggest for him? He does not do regular exercise or yoga. Thanks in advance for your advice.

Joann Evans
Sacramento, CA

Dear Joan,

A regular practice of yoga would be most helpful. Our muscles loose their tone as we age, especially if we do not regularly exercise.

Here's a yoga pose to help strengthen knees and ankles : Lightning Bolt! Standing with feet separated about shoulder width apart, raise your arms straight over your head with palms facing each other. Bend your knees and bend slightly forward with a flat back. Keep your neck in line with your spine. Breathe. Hold for a significant amount of breaths and increase the breaths each day or week. With continual, disciplined practice, this pose can strengthen knees and ankles. It also strengthens the heart by maintaining the arms over the head.

**Namaste,
Joan**

WOWEE!!!! From Wichita!!!

Yo Joan,

You have some great stuff.... This internet is a whole new world to me. I have been practising Yoga for more years than I can remember...way back to 1957 in Bay Area California...Gives you a hint... The last 18 years I have been very serious about my dedication to the practise and about eight years ago I was asked to begin teaching here in Wichita Kansas. One class led to another and another and another and now I am teaching 20 classes each week. The blossoming of this beautiful experience has been glorious. I really know at last what it means to have meaning in your life...I feel like I am not only helping myself, but I am helping others and it is incredible. So energizing!!! Days when I have five hours of teaching, I end up feeling freer and lighter and more serene than I can believe.

Over the years from the different teachers I have worked with, I have developed a style of my own which seems quite unique and extremely effective for students of all levels of fitness and flexibility. In my classes at present I have a number of youngsters 5-10 years old and also a class of seniors from 83 to 96. Then in between are all those\ in various forms of fitness and ability and it is thrilling to be able to reach out to one and all right where they are 'right now'. I preach that we each get the same value from the pose regardless where we are today. Stretching to our max, not cheating ourselves, but not overdoing.

At any rate, if you have time, check out my website and give me any feedback you may have....www.yogawithflora.com. This is such a new and incredibly exciting world in front of me. It has become obvious to me that age has nothing to do with our ability to progress in this wonderful world of limitless flexibility and energy, however, it does seem apparent to me that my perceived age does add a note of encouragement to others in class who are beginning at a more advanced time in their lives. Coming up on 73 and I am more flexible than I ever was at 23, so it would be difficult to get me to accept world limitations regarding age and activity.

Even this world of high tech shall not pass me by. The more I become adept at using it all, the more fun I shall have. Meanwhile, I am so pleased that early on in my searches, I have discovered joan@yoyoga.com. You will no doubt be a 'favorite' bookmark for me.

I shall look forward to hearing from you when you have time....

Flora
Wichita, Kansas

Dear Flora,

Wow! Thank you for that energetic and heartfelt letter! I hope readers will check out your website and your video too! It sounds like you have certainly put your time and effort into something that really IS making a difference. Thank you, Flora!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Cards, Anyone?

Yo Joan,

I saw a letter in your column recently inquiring about where they could find a set of yoga cards with one yoga pose per card that could be arranged in individualized routines. I found such a set called "Yoga Cards: Create your Own Yoga Program" by Tim Clark & Loretta McArthur at a Learningsmith Store in my area. I checked and they are also available at Amazon.com and at BarnesandNoble.com. I really like mine and use them all the time.

Ede
Nashua, NH

Dear Ede,

Thank you very much for the additional info on great cards! I look forward to seeing these!

**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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Welcoming others to his home,
Being friendly to a newcomer, and for just a minute
think he's someone I know.
but it's always Jesus--I can tell by the way he serves.

by Summer Waters, age 11.

Asana For The Week

Yoga Philosophy

Yoga Tips

Yo Joan

Yoyoga Bookstore

Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest

About Joan

To Find Out More About Joan's Classes, [Click Here!](#)

Web Site Awards:

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Kidney Stones and Yoga

Yo Joan,

During last year I got married to a great lady here in Orlando and left for a while, The Great County of Cornwall in the UK, And then Back in July 98 had a Kidney stone via Lipotripsy, This successfully removed the stone being only 3mm in size. Since then I have had problems with stiffness in the low back, I used to do yoga in the UK via a local class but let it slip as things got rather busy, I recently bought a Idiot's guide to Yoga, And found the three positions you suggested on page 219, yesterday afternoon I started some very gentle yoga by myself for about an hour and woke up this morning with less pain, So did a half hour this seems to be working. Can you suggest any other positions? Also how can I find a good Yoga teacher here in Orlando?



Geoff
Orlando

Dear Geoff,

I am still trying to figure out the connection between your marriage and the kidney stone?

It's not surprising your lower back would hurt because this is the area of the kidneys and obviously they have suffered lately. If you did the exercises recommended only once for a half hour and saw the positive effects...just imagine what a regular daily practice would create! I hope you also realize this, Geoff, and will continue these postures in times of health as a preventive measure for times of woe. So many times people turn to yoga to help them with health concerns and then once their health comes back they go back to all the negative habits that got them into the jam in the first place. A regular yoga

practice is like a gentle reminder to take care of yourself for you are VERY important.

Inversions (headstand, shoulderstand) and poses that take some of the pressure off of the lower back (like downward dog) are most helpful for kidney problems. Since kidney stones are stones we want OUT, I would recommend avoiding these inversions once the situation has developed to that extent. Continue working with standing poses to strengthen the immune system. Once the kidney stones have passed or dissolved (through your hopeful diet changes), I would study these inverted poses under the guidance of a qualified yoga teacher. Here is a yoga teacher I found in your area...Elissa Maguire (407) 699-5444. Let me know how your studies go!

Namaste,
Joan

Acid Aches

Yo Joan,

First let me tell you how much I have enjoyed your Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. I am only a seven month veteran, but I have a yoga routine I practice for 30 minutes every day. I began this in September as a result of a bad back and an inability to do much else. And now I am a true believer.

My problem is that I am finding that my acid reflux condition is more serious (GERD), and much of the literature on that disease suggests no bending over. Can you suggest any books, etc. that might speak to this condition and how I might make changes in my yoga routine to accommodate it or yoga positions that would be good for this condition.

Thank You,
Lynn Gatchell
Athens, Georgia

Dear Lynn,

First of all, are you sure what you have is acid reflux? The reason I ask is because I had similar symptoms to acid reflux a year ago and found out it was due to a virus that was able to be eradicated through appropriate medications. Do check with your doctor to make sure of your diagnosis.

If you do have this condition, as you probably already know, your diet is of paramount importance to how effective the postures will be. Some helpful postures I would suggest (along with a non-caffeine, non-alcohol, sattvic diet) would be a regular practice of Upward Facing Dog along with Downward Dog. I would also recommend a regular practice of Sun Salutations to aid digestional problems.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Listen to YOUR body!

Yo Joan,

I bought your book (Idiots Guide) and love it. It was my first exposure to yoga. I then went and bought a video tape at Blockbuster called "Total Yoga" by Tracey Rich and Ganga White. The program last for almost an hour but I have been doing it each morning at 5:30.

There is one exercise that is giving me headaches. It is where You lift feet to the ceiling while the back of your head stays on floor. It does not hurt my neck during the exercise but later in the day I have headaches I am sure it is from the neck pressure. If I continue will my body adjust or should I discontinue this exercise?

Sincerely,
Jeff in Texas

Dear Jeff,

Discontinue this exercise. Again, discontinue this exercise. Each of our bodies are uniquely beautifully different. We must learn to honor and respect these differences and to listen to the profound wisdom of our individual body. It sounds like you are listening, now take the extra action necessary and respond by discontinuing this posture. Check with your yoga teacher for a more appropriate and healthy posture for you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Tobacco smoke & yoga?

Yo Joan,

I have question about how to handle this problem and enjoy Yoga exercise. I am 58 years old and do not tolerate tobacco smoke around me. Thanks in advance for your advice.

Eugene Nepomnichy
Webster, Texas
I was born in Moscow, Russia

Dear Eugene,

Hmmmm. Most yoga classes do not have tobacco smoke. If incense bothers you, let your yoga teacher know so he or she can refrain from using incense. If they do not stop using incense, find another yoga class and a more sensitive instructor.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Ticklish Tootsies revisited

Yo Joan,

Thanks Joan, I received my tapes right before I left on my trip, thanks. The tapes are great and the foot massage tape has helped with the "tickles". You should do a foot massage video tape by the way. On your yo Joan column you asked to know how my laughing goes? Well on my trip to Banff (skiing) we stayed at a spa and received some treatments on my last day. I had a pedicure/reflexology treatment (my girlfriend had to talk me into it) and was pretty nervous. The pedicure was extremely ticklish (the filing and scraping on my soles was too much) but the reflexology treatment was absolutely wonderful, the firmer grip helped and the therapist instructed deep breathing and I totally relaxed. I will definatly have another reflexology treatment . I hope I was not to much trouble for the pedicurist she was nice but I was in over my head with that... ha ha... thanks again with the advice.

Tim
Seattle, Washington

Dear Tim,

Let it out and laugh! How lucky you are that you can! You are most certainly in now over your toes! So happy to know that you are getting the touch of it.:)

**Namaste,
Joan**

Class dismissed!

Yo Joan,

am reading the book "The Complete Idiot's Guide To Yoga." I am really enjoying it. I have been wanting

to look into Yoga for a long time but just haven't felt motivated to start any excersizes. I'm 24 now and just had a baby about 4 weeks ago. So now I'm really motivated to get back in shape. I'm not too sure what it is about Yoga that attracts me. I think it is the mixture of it's spirituality and fitness it provides. That's just what I'm looking for.

Well, my question is this. I live in a very small town. I would love to take classes but I have not been able to find a serious teacher to learn from. I don't want to go to a gym and take a class there cause I doubt I will get the serious teachings from them. So how can I proceed in finding a serious class without paying an arm and a leg. I'm not confident enough to do it on my own yet until I am taught right.

Well that's my question...thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to your reply.

Thank You,
Christie M.

Dear Christie,

I am glad you looked past the title of our book to open it and see what it is about. So too, please look past the exterior of a gym, for you may find a pearl of a teacher inside. Give him or her a chance. Try a class out before you rush to a decision. I taught in gyms, perhaps there were many that dismissed me because of where I was teaching. Now I teach in a college, perhaps there are many who dismiss me because of where I am teaching. Who knows where I'll be teaching next? (I am looking for a garden without bugs - I am begging the bugs to please dismiss me!) Keep your search up for a teacher who embodies the teachings he or she is teaching. But also, Christie, do not judge a book by its cover, or by the price of a teacher's class.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Heaven on earth

Yo Joan,

I'm in the middle of reading your book "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation" and it is simply outstanding! I can't thank you enough for writing this book. I meditate daily, but through your book learned a lot more about the practice than I ever thought I'd know. I have some really bewildering things happen to me in meditation and I just love it...

Anyway, thank you. It's an excellent endeavor with excellent results.
Cindi Cranford
McConnells, SC

Let's remember, we may be entertaining Angels unaware...

Dear Angel Cindi,

Thank you.

**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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Runner's Yoga

Yo Joan,

I really love your CIG to yoga. I have been doing yoga for about 2 years now and have gotten my husband and 2 toddlers involved as well. Now I'm going after my dad who is a big athlete and loves to run. I found an article on running and yoga in the Yoga Journal. It had five asanas to try and one of them was the pigeon pose. I gave him the article and so I don't have the sanskrit name. Edka Raja something or other. I looked in my 4 yoga books, including CIG, and I couldn't find it. Being the worldly woman that you are, can you enlighten me once again? I'm so thrilled that he has taken an interest. Thank you for your time and sharing your love of yoga with the world.

Julie
Mesa, Arizona



Dear Julie,

Nice to hear from you again, Julie. The Sanskrit name for Pigeon Pose is "Kapotasana." It is a difficult pose and puts a great amount of pressure on the knees. Since runners already put a tremendous amount of pressure on the knees, I would be very careful with this pose. There is a book on the market called "The Runner's Yoga Book" by Jean Couch that I would highly recommend reading. It is very specific to the runner's needs.

Namaste,
Joan

Future Teacher

To Joan,

I have been studying Yoga for several years, and have a wonderful teacher, who has helped me see that I have found my passion in life. I have a complete library of Yoga, save every article I find in notebooks, study constantly. I would like to train to become a Yoga Teacher, although my teacher says training is not necessary. Can you give me any ideas. I have information on classes that train and certify in 4 days. Does this sound possible? I have read all your books, and have most of them in my library. Love them and refer back to them all the time. I would appreciate any help or ideas you could give.

Thank you,
Donna Hunt
Gahanna, Ohio

Dear Donna,

I tend to think that training is very important. You say you have been studying for years and have a wonderful yoga teacher - this is wonderful training. The schools that offer 4 day certification programs, I really do not know anything about. I went to the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago for my certification. It was a 14 month program. It incorporated a lifestyle approach to the study and gave the students the quality time needed to apply this lifestyle and hopefully reflect this in their teachings. I can't imagine teaching yoga after one weekend. However, everyone has different needs and motivations. I would recommend doing more research on the school you are considering...ask questions: "How long have they been in existence?" "What are the backgrounds of the teachers?" "What does tuition include?" Ask yourself what your motivations are and what you want out of certification. And in the meantime, continue your yoga studies on your own and with your wonderful teacher. Someday soon, Donna, I may be taking a class from you!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sunny California

Yo Joan,

I'm 6 months pregnant, and am looking for a yoga class in the Southern California area...Well, on the internet there are quite a few. But, I'm new to all this, so is one class better than another? Is there one instructor better than another? It looked as if there are many different types and teachings. I need a good class that will get me through childbirth. This is my first child, and the hospital where I'm giving birth does NOT use pain medication. (In other words: NO EPIDURAL!) So with Lamaze and Yoga, I'm hoping I can get through this! Please help me! If there is a class or instructor you can recommend in this area, I would really appreciate it.....

Thanks again,
Maryann Castro
Southern California

Dear Maryann,

I would not change your exercise routine if you are 6 months pregnant. Now is the time to rather explore avenues of meditation and deep relaxation. After your beautiful baby is born, then a new exercise routine would be a wonderful way to start your new life.

In your area, I would recommend the Sivananda Center in Santa Monica. I took many classes there and I regard this center highly. They offer yoga classes and classes specifically in meditation and relaxation.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Howdy Western Suburbs!

Hi Joan,

Do you know of any yoga classes in the western suburbs? I live in Wood Dale, IL.

Thanks,
Sally
Wooddale, IL

Dear Sally,

Gosh, Sally. There are so many! Pick up a copy of the free newspaper called "Yoga Chicago." You can get a copy at Borders Bookstore in Oak Brook. In the back are listings of teachers throughout the Chicago area. In Downers Grove, there is a wonderful new yoga studio called "Yoga Among Friends." The phone # 585-4640. I would definitely check this fine studio out.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hot Soles

Yo Joan,

I am a newcomer to the world of yoga, and I have seen how it can positively affect one's health and well-being. I have plantar fasciitis in my left foot and I was wondering if there are any poses that might help me deal with this problem and the chronic pain I experience. My medical doctor says it is caused by a weakening and tearing of the muscles that connect from the bottom of my heel to the rest of my foot. Stretching out my calf muscles helps somewhat, but I thought maybe you could suggest other poses or exercises to help. Surgery isn't warranted, and I dislike taking so much pain medication when it really doesn't solve the basic problem. I think stretching must be the key, but I could use some direction.

Thanks for a great resource on the Web. Also, your Idiot's Guide to Yoga is excellent!

MaryBeth
Oxford University Press

Dear MaryBeth,

I would recommend inversions to take the constant pressure off of your feet. This would be headstands and shoulderstands under the guidance of a qualified yoga instructor. If the muscles in your feet are tearing and weakening, stretching them is not necessarily a very good idea right now. Be patient and kind with your feet and give them permission to gather strength back. Massage is also an avenue for you to explore. If the soles of your feet are inflamed, as "fasciitis" implies, do not massage the feet directly. Massage the inside of your palms instead. There are reflex points in the hand that correspond to the feet. Pick up a book on reflexology. I would suggest the outside corners of the hand and all around the heel of the hand. Whenever you think of it, massage your hands, particularly your left hand. Let me know how your plantar condition goes...and I hope it goes away soon.

**Namaste,
Joan**

k-k-KARMA!

Yo Joan,

Greetings! I wish to thank you for the wonderful work you have done with "Complete Idiots" of the world. For the last three weeks I have added asanas to my daily regime and pranayama to my work schedule and I have seen amazing results. I do have one question concerning philosophy and daily attitude. I can work diligently on finding the positive within myself and work to remove the negative within... but what do I do about the negativity around me? I think I can understand why some Yogis become hermits! No matter where you turn there is negativity... the media is full of details of mankind's worst faults and there are days that there are no stories of hope to balance. I meditate on the beauty within myself and within nature itself... but there are days that I can't quite get the terrible things out of my mind and they affect me later. Any help would be greatly appreciated, not just by me, but by some other friends of mine.

Rev. Christopher N. Temple.
Meadville, Pennsylvania, just south of Erie.

Dear Rev. Christopher,

Thank you for this question and allowing me to answer. I have definite views on this and also definite struggles with this myself. It is relatively easy to practice the philosophy of yoga (non-violence, truthfulness, contentment etc.,) when the sky is sunny and people around are laughing and loving; however, when the sky is cloudy and the people around are fuming and cussing and sick and...what then? This is when the true practice of yoga begins.

The world is the way it is from many, many years of karma. Many, many conditions have been set forth that create the reality that exists today. When a snowball starts down a mountain, it is relatively easy to stop. But if you let that snowball build and build, it can bulldoze a house! So too, karma that builds becomes stronger and stronger and ever more difficult to change.

The way to truly see if one's spiritual life is progressing is to notice what happens to one's self when the waters get wavy...even violent. You can not control the reactions of your neighbor. You can control your reactions. You can control your thoughts. You can bring a positive force into a dismal situation - even if it seems meaningless. Your actions, however small they may feel, are extremely significant karmically. The snowball going down the hill has the potential to change course. A small twig in the path of a gathering snowball down a mountain, can change the direction of the snowball. Because of this small twig, instead of the snowball hurting something or someone in its path, it may lodge against a mountain and end up shielding animals from the wind. Snow also has the potential to melt, and so does karma. Warm energy must be applied for snow to melt (tapas). It is not easy to change the force of karma. It is, however, essential.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Low back blues

Yo Joan,

I am reading your book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga*, and I really enjoy it! Thanks so much for writing a book that appeals to those of us who aren't yoga masters but are interested in it! I am 24 years old and have had an achy lower back for a few years. A couple of weeks ago I pulled a muscle in my back and since then have had to discontinue my regular Low-Impact Aerobic routines. I've tried to do them but it causes my back to ache all day if I do. I'm interested in beginning a yoga routine that will help to stretch and strengthen my lower back. I'm afraid of having back pain for the rest of my life and am hesitant to do any 'jumping around' exercises...so, I'm hoping that yoga will be my answer. Can you suggest some positions that can help me in this quest?

Thank you so much!

J. M. Curry

Dear J.M.,

I would suggest single leg lifts to strengthen the abdominal muscles which will strengthen the back. After a few weeks of single leg lifts, increase to double leg lifts. Do these every day. If double leg lifts are too straining for the back, go back to single leg lifts. Be patient. Your back problem did not happen overnight, and neither will the healing. However, you are on the road to recovery.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A smiling heart...

Yo Joan,

Thank you so much for putting the lovely poem, "I See Jesus" Through the Eyes of a Child, on your web sight. It made my heart smile.

Thanks Again,
Julia Rasmussen

Dear Julia,

Mine too. And so did your letter.

**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.**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan

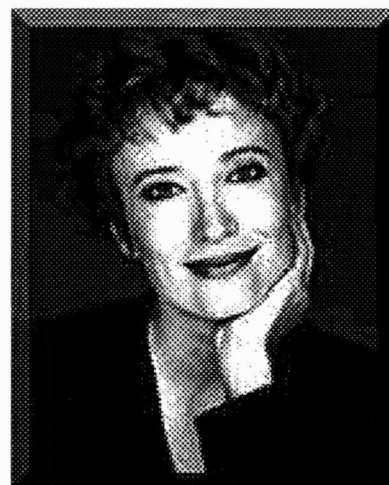


Lefty is Right!

Yo Joan,

First let me say I really am enjoying the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. I don't think I'll get to the Lotus Headstand anytime in this lifetime, but even the easier ones really do make me feel great.

I'm the type that likes to follow directions (despite the fact that I am male, and an engineer, no less!) I gave up on the directions for the Warrior 1 pose on page 131 and just looked at the picture. To match the picture, shouldn't all the "lefts" and "rights" be reversed, except "bend your left leg"?



Lyle Gillman
Seattle, WA

Dear Lyle,

Yes, Yes, Yes. Forget all the lefts and rights. Step one foot out, bend it. Lunge. Arms up. I am not one to get hung up on written text. I am one of these touchy, feely types. I tell my yoga classes...Look! Just do it!!! (well, not exactly, I do give some instructions). My approach is much more from a feeling state. Perhaps it is my pisces moon? You mention "Even the easier ones really do make me feel great." That is EXACTLY the idea. If it makes you feel otherwise, than perhaps another path is worth exploring. It sounds like, you, Lyle, are on an incredible path of infinite discoveries.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Career break for new beginning

Hi Joan,

I enjoyed your 'Idiot's' guides to yoga and meditation and am contacting you through your email address in your website. Allow me introduce myself. I'm from UK teaching in a high school in Singapore and have studied yoga on and off for a number of years.

Now, I was wondering if you could give me advice on some good, in depth courses on yoga, including teacher training courses. I will be taking a career break for a few months - possibly up to a year -and want to use the time well. I'm currently in Singapore and India isn't so far so I could even go there. Of course the US is a place where there are some great teachers and courses too. Of course there are many places I have heard of and people have recommended a number of courses but the choice is bewildering. What do you think? I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours
Simon Hunt
Singapore

Dear Simon,

I think since you are already out east you should definitely check out some of the incredible opportunities there. For one, the Sivananda Organization has a month long intensive training program through their worldwide ashrams. One of the ashrams is in India. In the United States, the Kripalu Center in Massachusetts also has a program where you could live on the premises for as long as you want. It is called Karma Yoga. They offer ongoing daily classes, workshops, and month long teacher certification programs. The grounds are beautiful, clean and inspiring.

All ashrams I have been to are clean and inspiring. It is part of the yoga study. If you do not find this in your yoga community, you may want to question this. Part of the study is cleanliness and respect for your surroundings and all sentient creatures. Many well-known yoga teachers have their headquarters in India. Certainly, If I were in India, I would take classes at the Iyengar studio there. Although I am not trained in Iyengar, people come from all over to study there. BKS Iyengar wrote the book "Light on Yoga," which is almost like a yoga bible for hatha yoga postures. The list goes on and on. There are many opportunities for stays of a month or longer in many yoga ashrams. I would HIGHLY recommend this type of study. It will help you become grounded in a lifestyle approach to yoga. Yoga truly is a lifestyle.!

Namaste,
Joan

Help!

5/1/99

Yo Joan,

I just recently got back into yoga and thought I'd look up your site. I bought your Idiot's Guide last April and was quite diligent in my practicing. I was doing it more to loose weight and tone myself. I was doing pretty good until September when work got busy and I didn't have time or patience to do the yoga.

I'm wondering if there is a good way to keep the drive to practice. I can't afford to take a class, which I would love to do, so I'm going from your book. I find myself following the suggested sessions at the back of the book but the hour long one only takes me 25 minutes. I tried to keep the journal and did for a while but I just didn't know what exercises I should be doing for what I need.

I want to slim down my legs, hips and stomach and I was wondering if there were more specific exercises I could do to help them. I'm 24 and do a lot of sitting for my work (I'm an artist) so anything that helps my back and legs is great. I just need some more inspiration to keep me in the mood to do yoga and stick with it to see the results I want. Can you help me?

Leigh
Oakville, Ontario Canada.

Dear Leigh,

If loosing weight is your objective, I would recommend some other high intensity workout to compliment your yoga practice. Once the weight is lost, you can more fully focus on your yoga practice. When you are forced not to think of ice cream sundaes, that is usually the only thing thought of - in fact, lots of extra chocolate syrup and whipped cream is always on top too. So, if the fullness of your legs bother you, see if changing the shape of them really makes you feel better. I will place a bet that once the legs trim, you will start to focus on a different part of the body you are not content with. You will see that the shape of your body is not the problem. It is your view and acceptance of your body. If you can change the image - GO For it! Change it! If you can not, accept it...and it will change of its own accord.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Posture Perfect

Yo Joan,

Hi there, once more i would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your remarkable book. It is very motivating and getting more and more interesting day by day, I am just glued to the book. i would like your recommendation on what posture to practice, if possible what page on your book to solve some of my problem as listed below:-

1) When i get up in the morning i feel that my chest is all cramped up and I had to like stretch it within my chest and sometime it if quite difficult to release the muscle.

5/1/99

What kind of pillow do you sleep with? Try changing pillows. Are you able to express your emotions in life fully? You are contracting your heart chakra. You need to bring more action and more loving communication to those you love.

2) Is there a specific posture to reduce my tummy and my waist.

Your tummy and waist is your mars chakra. You need to activate it in order to find the balance in your venus chakra. Good idea that you would like to bring some 'action' there. Try boat poses and warrior poses.

3) My wife has got a big "back" (buttock) and thigh, is there a specific posture for this.

Your loving acceptance is one big posture. Her loving acceptance is another. Warrior poses and all standing poses help us to develop strength and confidence. Whatever one's physical size, a sense of peace can be found there. Steady breathing, love, acceptance, and kindness. Yoga is not about creating beautiful bodies. It is about creating beautiful minds to house the temple of our spirits. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Which came first, the body or the mind? I would like you to translate all these questions into the temple of your spirit.

Thank you again
Chitra
West Malaysia, Selangor.

Dear Chitra, it is you I thank in allowing me to answer so boldly.

namaste,
Joan

Yoga in Guam

Yo Joan,

I must first thank you for your quick response to my 'Low Back Blues' question. I will try the poses that you recommend and let you know how they work out.

My next question is do you know of any yoga instructors on Guam? Thank you so much!

Peace and Blessings,
Jennie M. Curry
Dededo, Guam

Dear Jennie,

Whew, that's a toughie! I have looked and looked and have not found any. I hope you

are collecting a yoga library of books and tapes. Do any readers out there know of any instructors in Guam?

Namaste,
Joan

Sanskrit Sensations

Yo Joan,

Hello. I have been practicing yoga for a few months now and am very interested in learning more about the Sanskrit names for the poses and the mantras. Is there a book that focuses on the Sanskrit for yoga? I would greatly appreciate any suggestions. Thanks!

Tasha Danner
New York City, New York

Dear Tasha,

There are schools that completely focus on Sanskrit terms for yoga. Iyengar schools use many Sanskrit terms. There are tapes that offer correct translations of dialect too. Call the Iyengar Institute at 415 753-0909 for more info.

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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan

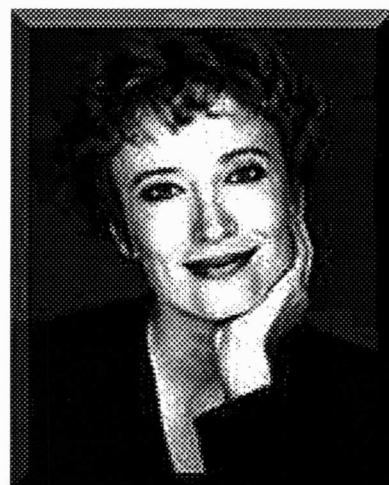


Massage in Mass

Hi Joan,

My name is Heather, and I am very intersted in massage therapy, and was wondering if maybe you can send me some information about where there a school that teaches it near me. I live in Tewksbury, Mass. I would opreciate it very much.

Sincerly,
Heather
Tewksbury, Mass



Dear Heather,

I am not sure of specific massage schools in your area. A way to find out would be to check with the national organizations of massage. The American Massage Therapy Association and The Associated Bodywork and Massage Association. Both organizations have websites. Schools are usually credited by one of the organizations. Since these organizations are competitive, only one organization is usually associated with each school. Please do read forward a couple letters to find the links to these organizations.

Namaste,
Joan

Up front!

3/15/99

Yo Joan,

Thank you for your wonderful web site. I also have your Idiots Guide to Yoga which is excellent as well. I have trouble with forward bending. What can I specifically do to release my lower back? Currently I practice w/ bent knees but I'm still not very flexible. Any pointers that you could offer would be appreciated.

Thank you,
Chloe
Wyandotte, MI

Dear Chloe,

Visualize bending from the hip joint rather than from the waist. Try sitting on the floor and placing some pillows on a chair and leaning forward on it. Stay in this relaxed position for as long as you can. Listen to some good music and tell yourself to stay there through a certain set of songs. This will help you stay there.

It does not matter how far you bend. What matters is the slow consistent release that will happen in the hip joint eventually. Yoga is not a quick fix. Patience is a large part of the practice. It is mighty fine to bend your knees in a forward bend. I see many people in classes who are touching their toes with completely contracted chests. They are all hunched over, but they are touching their toes! It is not all that helpful for them though. If they bent their knees and moved forward from the hips with a flat back it would feel so much better - and be very healthy too! I, too, bend my knees often in forward bends. Especially in the early mornings.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Massage Organized

Yo Joan,

I recently purchased your book, "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" and am enjoying it very much. I have been practicing yoga for a little over a year in fits and spurts. I'm hoping to attain a little more consistency in practice this year.

I was exploring your web-site and noticed you are a member of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), among other organizations. You had links to several of those organization's web-sites, but not to the AMTA's web-site. It is a pretty informative web-site about massage and your yoga audience might find it interesting. I think there's a lot to be said for the combination of massage and yoga, both wonderfully holistic experiences, one which is done for you and the other which you do for yourself! You might want to update your web-site to include a link to the AMTA web-site. Their URL is: www.amtamassage.org. Feel free to link to the AMTA-CA Chapter web-site as well, but I think National's web site is more appropriate

for a national audience.

Namaste!
Celenia Rettger
AMTA-CA Chapter
(800) 696-2682 (For CA Callers Only)
(925) 939-2682 (For All Others)
Visit Our Web-site at: <http://home.earthlink.net/~amtaca>

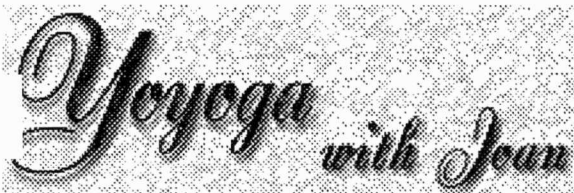
Dear Celenia,

Thank you very much, Celenia! The AMTA website link is now added in the About Joan section. I encourage yoyoga readers to check it out. I have also added an Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals link at <http://www.abmp.com/>. ABMP has been very receptive to my Idiot's Guide books and I did appreciate the personal correspondence I received from them regarding the publication of the books. The Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals organization is noted on the cover of my most recent book with Eve Adamson, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation."

**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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home



Internet Heaven

Hi Joan,

In your Yoga book, you list some websites, but I am experiencing accessing some of them. I am not that experienced on the internet so perhaps I am doing something incorrectly although I had no difficulty accessing your site or Yoga Journal's site or the Spirituality/Yoga/Hinduism homepage (that is a great site). Maybe you could provide links to all these sites to give easy access to those of us who may be having difficulty - or if the addresses of the sites have changed I would appreciate an update. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Blessings,
Morgan

Dear Morgan,

Due to the constant changing nature of the internet, it would be a difficult and constant challenge to keep up with all the site changes. I have enough other challenges right now to keep me going strong. At the time of the CIG to Yoga book printing last year, the sites listed in the book all existed. Since then some have gone to internet heaven, god only knows where they are now. In the [About Joan](#) section of this website, I have additional links to sites that I have found quite helpful, and I hope you will too

Namaste,
Joan



Beautiful Children

Yo Joan,

I was just wondering if you could help me at all. I am studying to become a primary school teacher and at the moment I am doing a report on breathing, posture and flexibility. I was wondering if you knew any activities that I could teach young children, between the ages of 5 and 11 to improve their breathing, posture and flexibility. Thanks for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,
Terri

Dear Terri,

I just taught a wonderful group of Montessori students last week (ages 3 - 7), so your question comes at quite an inspired time. Young children have fantastic imaginations. Yoga will teach them new ways of relating to nature and animals. Children instinctively have a sensitivity to nature, however yoga will teach them ways of expressing it and connecting with the environment in ways that are inclusive and loving. Teaching children of this age how to stretch like a dog, or a cat, or a tree, ultimately leads them to be more sensitive to the experience of these other life forms. If a child can begin to feel what a dog feels like when it stretches, a child understands that a dog does "feel." These are important lessons for children to begin to understand. All of life is intimately connected. Since most of the yoga postures have to do with nature, each pose can be talked about in relation to the level of experience of the children. Most children have experienced dogs, cats, birds, trees, snakes, etc. They love exploring nature. Now they can explore it through their own body!

Older children also can find these same benefits. In addition, they directly model their teachers. So, I would highly recommend that you bring your teachings into all of your communications with these children. As you know, children are very smart and very sensitive. They know when someone is 'teaching,' and when they are walking their talk. I would suggest for you to continue on in your studies and development in breathing, flexibility, and strength. Continue on as a student. Bring your studies into your classes as a teacher. As you continue to grow, so will your students.

Namaste,
Joan

Chicago Retreat

Yo Joan,

I've e-mailed you before, telling you that I am a fan of your writing :-). Now, I have a question: I have a very basic 3 day "certification" in Hatha Yoga class formatting from AAAI/ISMA. I have started teaching some very basic classes, but I have the desire to do a retreat and/or more in depth training/education (preferably in Hatha/Ashtanga). The problem is the price of some of these ventures. I live in North Chicago. I don't want to travel TOO far (as that gets expensive as well). Any suggestions? Web page references, phone numbers, addresses would be great (when/if you have time to respond, of course). I know you're busy. Thank you in advance for any help.

Bernie Marsiglia
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Bernie,

Never too busy for you, Bernie! The Sivananda Yoga Vendanta Center has a Yoga Weekend Retreat in Plano, IL, one hour from Chicago, June 4-6. I would start there. Call (773)878 7771 to register.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Run with it!

Hi Joan,

I am a runner. With stress fractures. Actually, with a long history of stress fractures so that I am beginning to wonder if I really am still a runner, because I seem to be recovering more than racing. As you have probably picked up already, I have not really done a good job at recovering. I just bought the "Complete Idiot" Book on Yoga (perfect for me) and although I haven't really started with any practice yet, (I just finished reading it today) I am wondering if Yoga will be a good way for me to recover from these injuries permanently while still maintaining a base level of fitness. Also, my stress fractures are in my shins, and I am wondering if there are any poses that will not be safe for me to assume.

Thank you so much.
Krista Wujek
Reisterstown, Maryland.

Dear Krista,

DO pick up the book "The Runner's Yoga Book" by Jean Couch. It is available in all major bookstores. It is an excellent yoga book for runners. It contains many poses and suggestions specific to the runner's needs. You will find everything in this book to maintain a healthy running practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Continue running!

Yo Joan,

I am a runner who started practicing yoga last summer to help with my flexibility. I have found it to be extremely beneficial to my stiff "runner's muscles" and am interested in teaching. I feel that many of the runners I know would gain a great deal from the slow, sustained stretching of yoga. What is a good way to get into teaching yoga?

Gretchen
Wichita, Kansas

Dear Gretchen,

Continue studying. There are many teaching programs around the country. Look for a program that you can afford. The longer it runs the better. The price of the program is not necessarily reflective of the quality of the instruction. GO to a few classes from the teachers of the program first to see if what is being taught feels right for you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Chicago classes

Yo Joan,

I read your website weekly, and enjoy it so much! I noticed that you live in Chicago. I will be visiting Chicago for a convention June 19th - 23rd. Can you tell me of any "drop-in" Yoga classes I might be able to attend. We will be staying in a hotel near the Convention Center, if that helps. Donna Hunt
Gahanna, Ohio

Dear Donna,

Welcome to Chicago! There are numerous yoga classes in the Chicago area. Check out the latest edition of the free monthly paper called "Yoga Chicago." It now is listed on the internet at - www.yogachicago.com. You will find many classes to choose from in this great local yoga paper. I am taking the summer off from teaching. I plan to be a full-time yoga student. Perhaps I will see you in a class while you are in town!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Simply wonderful

Yo Joan,

Hello > My best friend told me to look at this link. I thought it was beautiful and it reminds me of the yoga.

Have a wonderful day.
Mariah

Dear Mariah,

I will have a wonderful day. Thank you for helping to make it so wonderful.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Go Pro!

Yo Joan,

Hi, i bought your book "Idiot's Guide To Massage" for my wife. She is going to massage therapy school and is doing very well with her studies. She has to do a final project, she is doing it on sports massage (geared towards swimming). Your book had a lot of info on sports massage much than other books i have looked at. We are having a hard time finding info and or studies on sports massage, do you have any pointers or hint on where we can find some info or studies on this subject. I would like to thank you on the info that you and your book has already given to my wife, she is very excited about massage and good info can only help her be successful.

thanks again
Chris & Liz Laundra
Greenville, SC

Dear Chris and Liz,

I would suggest calling a local professional sports team and find out if they have a massage therapist (most do). Ask for the number of the therapist and give them a call. Hopefully the therapist will be very helpful in leading you in the right direction on where to study in your area. Also, do check out the websites for the AMTA and the ABMP. Both professional massage organizations will help guide you to the appropriate schools.

**Namaste,
Joan**

I'm a mover

Yo Joan,

I have just started yoga and my mother and a couple of magazine articles have given me a few moves but I would like to know more so that I can become a more in shape person. If you could possibly send me some of your moves it would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Yours truly,
Sarah

Dear Sarah,

How do you send someone a "move?" I am trying my best by offering you this website, Sarah. It's my best internet attempt at movin and groovin to the yoga beat.

**Namaste,
Joan**

From Nickles to Nirvana

Yo Joan,

First, thanks for such a great site. I need help in establishing a regular yoga practice. I was introduced to yoga in 1980 and have practiced on and off since then. I've tried various types -- Integral, Bikram's, Power, Ashtanga, & Iyengar. My problem is mostly discipline and psychological -- but it's not just that. Practical things get in the way, like my schedule. Or, my eating patterns (I can not practice unless my stomach is empty). First thing in the morning, I feel too stiff. Very demanding forms like power yoga or Bikram's series are too stimulating for me to do in the evening. What can you tell me about how I can become more regular - make this more of a daily priority?

Another problem may be that none of my friends or family are into anything even remotely close to yoga. I have no one to talk to or share with. It is a lonely pursuit. And, I easily fall off from regular practice when out-of-town guests visit, or when I travel with others.

I love yoga -- love it! No other form of physical movement has ever made me feel so good - physically, psychologically, & spiritually. I would even like to teach some day. Am I just making excuses for not being regular? Got any advice?

Cheryl

Dear Cheryl,

Having just returned from Las Vegas, the stimulation capital of the world, I am most happy to respond to these questions. I'd like to tell you a tale about boredom in Vegas (not a boring tale). My first day in Vegas, I was playing the nickel slot machines (I am not a big gambler - but, hey, it was my birthday and I was in Vegas!) and the lady right next to me won the jackpot! The horns started blowing, music started playing, and she looked up, bored, waiting for the attendant to come over and give her her winnings. I yelled in glee, "Hey, You Won!!! WOW!!!!" She nodded a mona lisa smile to me and glanced past me for the attendant. I went back to my nickle machine. Soon the lady on the other side of me won the jackpot!!! Horns...music...me yelling "YEAHHHHHHH! You WON!!!!!!!!!!ALRIGHT!!!!!!!!!" She nodded at me and sat back in her chair looking like she'd rather be sleeping somewhere. I went over to my friend who was playing a machine nearby and said "Hey, I am lucky! Everyone wins around me!!! How could someone win the jackpot and not get excited?!" We both laughed as I tried to wish luck to my friend's nickel machine (it didn't quite work).

On my third day, upon leaving Las Vegas, I put a nickel in one of the machines and pulled the lever. Jackpot!!! Horns blowing, music playing...a guy stops in his tracks to look at all the commotion and yells "You Won!!!" I looked up at him...utterly bored.

Luckily I was leaving Vegas, before my boredom took me to the quarter machines, then the dollar machines, etc., etc., etc. (I did have a great time in Vegas by the way - great shows, fantastic food, and I only lost \$10.00) How am I going to turn a Vegas story into a Yoga one? Good question. Would you please answer?

Back to your specific questions, Cheryl, yoga can certainly be a lonely pursuit. After all, it is a spiritual pursuit, and spiritual pursuits are solo adventures. The beauty of the practice is that we have opportunities to share our practice in yoga classes that afford us to be with like-minded souls. I encourage you to take more classes. Even if you do not become close to others in the class, it will encourage you to know that there are others out there who share the path you are on. My close friends and family are not into yoga either. They respect my choices and lifestyle, but they do not have an interest to follow yoga as closely as I do. I respect our differences, and I must admit, I rather enjoy them too. It reinforces my belief that there are many roads to enlightenment (one took me on an excursion to Vegas, after all).

I understand your difficulty in discipline. I do not know of anyone that finds discipline easy. I know of many disciplined people, but it is not usually easy for them to be so. In my personal practice, I have had a much harder time with discipline in the styles of yoga you mentioned. Perhaps these styles are more right brain orientated? They are very specific and structured. I have a much easier time with my practice when it comes from more of a feeling state. I have found the styles of Shivananda, Kripalu, Kriya, Kundalini, to be much easier for me to be disciplined in. It is not that I do not respect and learn greatly from all approaches. In fact, I have another Iyengar experience I am planning for this summer; rather, it is that I find these other styles to be like "home" for me. It is easy for me to keep 'going home,' to keep finding the joy in the discipline of these practices. So, I encourage you to continue to explore various styles until you find one that feels like "home" to you. And when you do, even if you study other approaches, you will always know you have a practice to come home to.

Lastly, I would encourage you to study the texts of the yoga philosophy - The Yoga Sutras, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Ramayana, etc. This will gather you deeper into the reasons you are studying hatha. It will make your practice so much richer and rewarding. There will come a time when your head touches the floor in a forward bend and your body twists almost completely around in a spinal twist and you will be able to do headstands without hesitations...then what? Prepare yourself now to go much deeper in

your studies...you can always go deeper. Going deeper creates discipline. Discipline takes you deeper.

**Namaste,
Joan**

p.s. and when you hit a plateau, there is always Vegas.

**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.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan

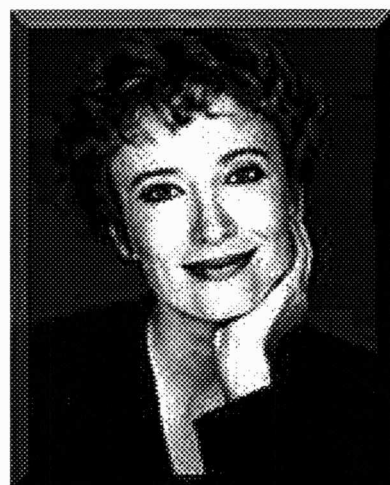


Yoga and Arthritis

Hi Joan,

Hi, my name is Selena McBride from the Arthritis Society British Columbia and Yukon Division. I am a kinesiology co-op student working on a literature review on the benefits of Yoga and Tai Chi programs on arthritis.

The information from this review will be used to offer increased exercise options for people with arthritis. I am wondering if you have any information on this subject or know any relevant sites, books or contacts for more information on this subject. Thank-you very much and I look forward to hearing from you!



Selena McBride
Arthritis Society - BC and Yukon Division

Dear Selena,

Arthritis, a debilitating joint condition can stem from numerous conditions. Rheumatoid arthritis usually stems from an autoimmune conflict and stress related conditions. A steady practice of hatha yoga postures and breathing exercises help to balance the immune system. Because yoga has such a cleansing effect on the body, the effectiveness of anti-inflammatory drugs increases and the dosage of these drugs can then be reduced. DO check out the book, "Yoga for Common Ailments" by Dr. Nagendra, for even more discourse on arthritis and other ailments.

Fibromyalgia, another form of arthritis where the surrounding tissues and muscles surrounding the joints become painful and tender, can also be improved by a regular practice of yoga. It is important to recognize with fibromyalgia, and with any form of arthritis, that the conditions that brought the arthritis have been, most likely, built up

over a period of years. Yoga is not a quick fix. It is a steady progressive treatment for the body. It is a steady progressive cleansing of the body. It also involves a study of how the mind works in relationship to the body. For example, one of the principles studied in yoga is "non-violence." Where are your thoughts? How often do your thoughts drift to self-condemnation or negative judgements of others? The mind can muck up the joints just as the body can. The mind and body are intimately connected. The physical movements by themselves are not enough for purification and a true healing. The mind must also be examined and brought actively into the healing process.

Age related arthritic conditions usually involve a chronic unhealthy conditioning of the joints. For example, if you walk with high heels for fifty years and your gastrocnemius muscles of the calf shorten, while your quadriceps lengthen to take up the slack, the knee joint suffers as a result of the imbalance. It's going to take a heck of a lot of time to balance out the effect of 50 years of misuse. It's possible but it's difficult.

Osteoarthritis effects load bearing joints like the knees and hips. What I consider to be one of the most beautiful aspects of the hatha yoga postures are that one's body acts as a weight in the exercises. For example, single leg lifts helps to bring mobilization back to the hips. The weight of your own leg lifting is the right weight balance for your body. We tend to think we need more and more weight to improve our health. Hatha Yoga is the study of balance. How can one find balance through the study of one's own body and mind? It is the process of finding these balances that improve one's health.

Hatha Yoga is a slow process to make the joints more fluid and flexible. It improves circulation and muscles tone. Diet is also an important aspect to the effectiveness of the study. If you are polluting your body with unhealthy foods, the effectiveness of the postures will also be effected. Healthy foods and healthy eating habits are encouraged. Pranayama, or breathwork, also plays an important part of the hatha yoga study. The breath is associated with the life force. If the breath is improved and deepened, so is the quality of your life. Pranayama also works to cleanse the body through various breathing exercises. It is best not to move joints when they are inflamed. This is the time when a steady practice of pranayama can improve circulation and increase energy. The healing effects of pranayama can help to reduce inflammation. When joints are no longer inflamed, begin slow, sensitive asana practice along with pranayama.

I realize this appears a rather long answer to your question, Selena, but it is really a very brief answer. Yoga is more than an exercise program. It is an ancient study that involves an entire lifestyle approach. There are many facets to it. All can be helpful to arthritis, and to any chronic condition.

Namaste,
Joan

Hong Kong

Yo Joan,

Hi, I'm a beginner but since my yoga teacher will leave Hong Kong soon, I want to join another class before I stop. Do you happen to know any Hatha yoga class in Hong Kong? Or where can I find more information?

Thanks,
Monica Lau
Hong Kong

Dear Monica,

I have only been able to find one yoga school in Hong Kong: Body and Soul in Discovery Bay at (852)2-987-5158. If they are not close, perhaps you could call them and they can put you in touch with classes that are closer to you. And if anyone in Hong Kong knows where I can find my dear old friend Winnie Cheung, who just sent me a Hong Kong postcard, please let me know!

**Namaste,
Joan**

How to become certifiable

Yo Joan,

am sixteen years old and have been practicing hatha yoga off and on since I was twelve, but most seriously the past year. I am interested in becoming a yoga teacher some day. How long does one have to have practice yoga to become a certified teacher? How does one become certified? Generally, how does one pursue this path?

Love,
Sara
Auburn, California

Dear Sara,

How wonderful that you are on this path at such a young age. I did not even know yoga existed when I was 12! There are various ways one can become certified. The most important way is to study with teachers you respect and want to learn from. There are some schools that offer certification after one weekend. There are some that require years of study. Certification in itself does not make one "certifiable." The study of yoga requires many years of study, some would say many lifetimes. We live in a certifiable society tho, this is true.

Let me tell you a little yogi story. I was talking to someone recently who is one of the head honchos at a large mental hospital. We had just met each other. I asked if she would consider some yoga classes for the patients there. She asked what my credentials were. I stuttered... "Well, I have written a few books." She then said that I must have a "therapeutic recreation" degree in order to be considered to teach there. I wonder how many Therapeutic Recreationists teach yoga? I am sure there are some. The point is, I now I could be very helpful for the patients. But, certifications are different for

different institutions. Yet another opportunity bites the dust.

Study with teachers that inspire you and are educated in what they are teaching. Discipline yourself in your yoga practice. Practice, practice, practice. Your life will reflect your teachings, this is yoga. I got my teachers certification through a 14 month teachers training program at the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago. This certification gave me the extra confidence needed to start teaching. It gave me some 'credentials.' It was an excellent program. I studied with teachers that I considered extraordinary (William Hunt, Kim Schwartz, Katie Lahiff). I have been taking a home study course through the Self-Realization Fellowship for many years. I read as much as I can about yoga, and I continue to take classes. These are just some of the things I have done and do in this certifiable world.

I highly encourage you on this path, Sara. It is a blessing that you have come to it so early in your life. The world needs you and your teachings.

Namaste,
Joan

I am taking the summer off from teaching to be a full time yoga student. Perhaps someday my studies will truly sink in, and the next time I approach a mental hospital, they will welcome me in with open arms.

Bandhaland

To Joan,

Greetings from Denmark. Yes, yoga is alive and well in Scandinavia. Being trained in medicine and science I was always a bit skeptical about yoga, alternative medicine, spiritualism, etc. About two years ago a good friend who is/was an aerobics teacher started offering a weekly course in Hatha yoga. More to please her than due to any personal conviction I joined the course. Joan, to be honest, this has had a more positive effect on my life than anything else in the past zillion years. Personally I feel much more open to alternative life styles, beliefs, mind/body health possibilities. It's weird but nice! I also feel healthy.

I'll never be a yoga master, my body is not flexible enough. But that doesn't matter -- yoga is not an Olympic discipline. In the past 6-8 months the teacher has gone from Hatha yoga to Power yoga (Astanga yoga). I find Hatha yoga, with the pauses between the asanas suits me better than the Astanga asanas in constant motion, producing gallons (or liters in Europe) of sweat, good muscle tone, but little feeling of "peace and harmony". The pauses gives one the opportunity of looking inward.

Your "Complete Idiot's" books are fantastic. I have read the Yoga book and am 23% through the Meditation book and have bought the Massage book for a friend. You are really talking to the reader, understand the reader's needs, and are not preaching. Meditation is not easy, I am a complete amateur, but it will come.

I do have one question: What exactly are "locks" in the asanas? I can feel tightening in the different regions, but the teacher says this is not the purpose, that the area should be "soft". What is one to look for? How can one tell if the "lock" is engaging? What is the purpose of locks? Any tips?

I don't know if you have been to Scandinavia, but it is very affluent, the social systems function, crime is at a minimum, but forms of spirituality are lacking. How one describes "spirituality" is very individual, but whatever it is it is lacking. (Confusing?). People are aware of this and there is a need and drive to get

closer to nature. At least for me, the need is there. I don't know how things are really like in the States now. I left the USA over twenty years ago on a "one year contract", but visit on business & to see family and friends at least 2-3 times a year. The information we get in Europe is primarily via the local press and CNN. Be interesting to compare "yoga" cultures and needs. If you ever are in north Europe please let me know and lets get together.

Namaste,
Ed Kowalski
Lyngby, Denmark

Dear Ed,

Thanks, Ed! Who knows, maybe someday I will pass your way! Thanks too for the great feedback on the books. Eve Adamson, my co-writer, and I really enjoyed working together on all three books. Three times the charm!

Now, regarding bandhas, they are tricky little rascals that are not to be forced. They are subtle ways of holding the energy to produce heat, thereby increasing the movement of energy flow when the bandha is released. Bandhas help to bring a focus to the movement and prevent prana from getting scattered. The three major bandhas are located at the root (mula), the stomach (uddiyana), and the chin (jalandhara). Since energy enters the body and settles in the base of the spine, applying the base bandha can help to move the kundhalini energy. According to the writings of Goswami Kriyananda, in his fantastic book, "The Spiritual Science of Kriya Yoga," (I highly suggest having it in your library) he states, "The Hatha Yoga Pradipika states that the root contraction practiced continually brings perpetual youth. Almost all women automatically hold this contraction." (Thanks, Swami! You are such a dear.)

Regarding the yoga culture in the states....hmmmmm, lately I have been sickened by all the advertising for enlightenment. I think the longings you describe exist every where. Even here, where you can buy happiness and enlightenment for only \$19.95. You say that in Denmark, " the social systems function, crime is at a minimum," Ed, you are closer to the Himalayas than I am!

Namaste,
Joan

P.S. Having a real flexible body does not make one a yoga master.

Continue running!

Yo Joan,

I have purchased all three of your "IDIOT GUIDE" books and thoroughly enjoy the writing style. My compliments to you for making these subjects understandable.

My question concerns yoga teacher training in the Chicago area. I reside in Rockford, Illinois (about 85 miles northwest of the Chicago loop). About 5 years ago I had open heart surgery. About three years ago I went to Dr. Ornish in Berkley California for a week. I have been following his life style changes for heart disease reversal for a number of years now. I have been practicing yoga for about four years.

Lately I have been considering becoming yoga teacher certified and teaching yoga to heart patients. I am trying to get into a seminar being given by Nischala Devi in Virginia in July, but they require that you have been teacher certified for three years. The title of the course is "Yoga for Cardiac patients". They are considering letting me monitor the course. Do you know of any yoga teacher training in the Chicago area that might be oriented toward heart patients? I'm not sure exactly what that means but I would guess it is on the line of restorative or integral yoga. I would appreciate any information.

Namaste,
Donald P Krakauskas
Rockford, Illinois

Dear Donald,

I do not know of a local program that focuses on this, but I do know of a local yoga teacher who does. William Hunt, who can be reached through Oak Park Yoga at 708-445-0392.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Bank Robbers Beware

To Joan,

I was going to write again to you anyway, even before I got the 60th anniversary email sent to me and thousands of others of your closest yoga friends:) I'm becoming quite a fan of yours: I've taken your book's suggestion and been going to a class since the beginning of May, as well as going through the book again. I feel great - I don't need to do the exercises I used to do to keep my occasional back pain away, and now my back is not even stiff first thing in the morning. I go to your website twice a month to see your latest advice and always feel I have learned something fundamental on my "path." You say in "Idiot's" acknowledgments that your future husband may not appear in this lifetime. What's the catch? Do you rob banks or something like that in your spare time? :)

Namaste,
Lyle

Dear Lyle,

Robbing banks would involve meeting past husbands I have no interest in meeting anymore. Your kind letter, Lyle, has helped my morale, and has probably prevented some future bank robberies too.

**Namaste,
Joan**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home



The noblebliss of teaching

Dear Joan,

My girlfriend recently took a yoga class with you at COD. She praised both your attitude and instruction (it's through her I received this email address).

I've been practicing yoga for years and have enjoyed the benefits it's brought to me, both physical and mental. Lately I've come to the realization that I could be part of bringing these benefits to others by becoming a teacher myself. How did you become certified or acquire the necessary credentials to create an income while helping to improve peoples lives (and don't you feel maybe the world in general by helping spread an elevated mental awareness?). Are there many yoga centers in the Chicagoland area, at least fairly locally, that offer 'certifications'? I'm 26 and live in Lombard and would greatly appreciate any tips or sources of info regarding this.



Namaste,
Glenn
Lombard, Illinois

Dear Glenn,

I encourage you on your teaching path. It has been, and continues to be, very rewarding for me. I understand your interest in wanting to have a career in something that you believe is making the world a better one. I searched for this for a long time. It finally started coming together for me when "my world" became a better one. Regarding the financial aspects, I truly did not go into teaching yoga for monetary reasons. In fact, I never expected to make a living in yoga. I expected my work in massage therapy to be my financial "living."

originally worked in the arts for over ten years as a singer and actress (translated, this

means I was a professional waitress, aka production assistant, for at least half of those years). I enjoyed working in the arts tremendously in my teens and twenties. Being of a somewhat quiet nature, this work helped me discover 'myself' by offering me legitimate chances of literally "walking in someone else's shoes". When I got into my thirties, I became ready to walk in my own shoes, and acting/singing became less fulfilling. I started exploring various other career paths. I went back to school and studied my interest in massage for national certification and also received a two year diploma in massage. I took a 14 month teacher's certification program in hatha yoga from the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago. At the time I took the class, I still did not have plans of teaching yoga, I just wanted to continue my yoga studies at a deeper level. I did not start teaching yoga until a few months after I graduated from the program. I taught one class, then another was added, then another. It simply snowballed.

I started writing little books for my classes to encourage students. I knew that if I could do some of these postures, they could do it. I wanted simple little books that would be physically inspiring and offer glimpses into a deeper study of yoga. This led to my website, that my friend, Kathie Huddleston, created for me. She said I could sell my little books on the web. I was then approached by Macmillan on the 'Complete Idiot's Guide' series via the web. This led to the three CIG books on yoga, massage, and meditation. I do not make any money on upkeeping this website, save for the few orders I get for my little books and tapes. Since 1996, I have put many hours into this site per week out of pure love and interest. I plan to continue to do so.

There are other teachers training program in the Chicago area too. Gabriel Halpern runs an Iyengar apprentice program through the "Yoga Circle" in Chicago which I have heard rave reviews over. Also, if you check out the latest Yoga Chicago Newspaper (they have a new website too at www.yogachicago.com) there will be a listing of various centers that are offering teachers training programs. I would recommend a program that lasts for a significant length of time. Listen and follow your heart, Glenn. Continue to rejoice in the success of others, as you continue to experience your ever deepening successes.

Namaste,

Joan

P.S. Hi and love to your girlfriend too.

Scoliosis

Hi Joan!

Is Yoga safe for someone with relatively severe scoliosis?

Paul

Dear Paul,

Relatively speaking, from a "severely" limited standpoint, yes. I do not know your medical concerns, and am not a doctor to answer these type of specific questions. However, since yoga works to increase the flexibility, strength, and functioning of your spine, I would think improvements from scoliosis might fit right along in there. I personally know of several yoga teachers who had suffered from scoliosis and no longer do. Was it yoga that helped them? They think so. I constantly have students coming up

7/1/99

to me and telling me how much yoga has helped their scoliosis. I know yoga helps the spine. I also know it is important to study with teachers who understand the spine and your concerns. Ask questions.

I know of a massage therapist that specializes in scoliosis and has helped many people in this. His name is Chuck LaFrano and can be reached via the Wellness and Massage Training Institute at 630-739-9684. Keep me posted on your improving condition, Paul.

Namaste,
Joan

Knee help

Dear Joan,

How are you? I hope you still remember me from the past. I've discovered yoga since I bought your book "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" about two years ago, when I used to be a full time college student. I was practicing back then 2-3 times per week in the morning. Now that I'm a full time homemaker, I have more time to practice. I do it about 3 times per week. But recently I notice that I'm very weak on doing poses with lunges. My knees are trembling all the time and burning. I experience a lot of stretch on my back leg. My balance is totally off. I didn't recall that I have so much trouble on lunges back when I was a student. Could it be because I no longer doing long walks from class to class? What would be a complimentary poses to strengthen my legs? In case you are curious, here's my 'routine': 2 full cycle of slow sun salutation, several back bending poses followed by forward bending, corpse pose and meditation. I sometimes substitute some poses with breathing. Thanks a lot for your help in advance. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Mariska Audriani
Plano, Texas

Dear Mariska,

Of course I remember you, Mariska!! Glad you are back in touch. Your daily hatha practice sounds wonderful. I wonder about the "burning" you mention, though. If it is constant and severe, do check with a physician. You may have torn a ligament. It is important not to overstretch. Be gentle with yourself and your practice. Ahimsa.

As we get older, we tend to sit more. The quadricep muscles that support the knees get weaker. The quadricep muscles are strengthened when we stand. To check the tone and strength of your quadriceps. Stand, separate your feet 4 feet apart. Bend over from the hips with a flat back. Look at the front of your thighs (the quadriceps). Try to tense these muscles and watch how your kneecaps lift. See how long you can tense it before it slacks off. Some people find it very difficult to strengthen these muscles. The muscles might tense slightly but then almost immediately become flacid. Other people are hypertonic, which means that their muscles are in an almost perpetual state of contraction. Their quadriceps are hard as a rock, but they are not able to relax the muscles. It is important to have a balance. Healthy muscle tone is the ability to hold a

7/199

muscle in a contracted state for a period of time and then release it. Relaxation is as important as the strength. If your quadriceps are weak, then more straight leg standing poses, like triangle, are in order. If your quadriceps are too strong, lightning bolt type poses are a good choice.

Hope you will find this information helpful, Mariska. Do keep in touch and let me know how you are progressing.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Mindfulness in Georgia

Hi Joan!

I have been practicing yoga for a little over two years now; I absolutely LOVE it! My yoga teacher recommended your Yoga for Idiots book, and it has been such a blessing. It answers so many of the questions that I have had for some time.

I currently live in Atlanta and would truly love to earn my Yoga certification. I read one of your responses in Yo Joan, and agree that the art of Yoga and certifications are a bit of a dichotomy. At any rate, can you please refer me to a Teacher's Yoga certification program here in Atlanta?

Thanks so much!

Namaste,
Stacey
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Stacey,

There is only one teacher's training program in Atlanta that I know of: contact Martin G. Pierce, the co-author of the book, "Yoga for Your Life" at 404-875-7110. I have not read his book or know about the program other than that it was listed in a resource directory of Yoga International Magazine. It is also stated in the directory that Martin teaches in the Viniyoga tradition of T.K.V. Desikachar. I do have T.K.V.'s book, "The Heart of Yoga." It is an excellent book - in fact, it is an outstanding book that you should run out to the bookstore and get!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Selena is back!

o Joan,

I really appreciate your reply to my question on Yoga for Arthritis. It is very informative and will help me in my Literature Review. You have a very informative website and I look forward to reading forthcoming issues! Thanks again!

Selena McBride
Arthritis Society - BC and Yukon Division

Dear Selena,

You are so welcomed, Selena! Ya'all do come back now, ya hear!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Ed is back!

Yo Joan,

Thanks for your comprehensive Internet reply to my recent e:mail. The "locks" have now been renamed "bandhas" and I have been practicing root contractions ("eternal youth" is not a bad goal, even if one is not female!). I've placed an order for "The Spiritual Science of Kriya Yoga" and look forward to reading it this Summer. The more I know I find out how much more there is to know.

All the best,
Namaste,
Ed K.
Lyngby, Denmark

Dear Ed,

And just when I figure out some answers, someone changes the questions....

Chloe is forward and back!

Yo Joan,

I tried e-mailing you previously to thank you and it bounced back to me for some reason. I wanted to thank you for your advice on forward bends. They feel "right" now and I owe it to you. You have removed a little pocket of frustration for me in my practice. I also wanted to thank you for a piece of advice that you gave

another reader about being a sole yogi. That mirrored how I felt too. Yoga would be sooooo beneficial for my husband but I guess he needs to come to it in his own time, if at all.

Thank you again.

Namaste,
Chloe

Dear Chloe,

After bending forward at the hip, it is then important to bend over backwards. You obviously are aware of this. A sincere thank you, Chloe.

Namaste,
Joan

Yoga and You and Me

Yo Joan,

I have been practicing yoga now for almost one year. It has brought new meaning to my life and also substantially decreased the pain in my sciatic nerve. I have read conflicting advice on incorporating other forms of exercise with yoga. I currently lift weights, as well as perform aerobic activity in addition to my yoga practice. Can one be fit and healthy and practice yoga only? What is your exercise routine?

Erin
Washington DC

Dear Erin,

There are different strokes for different folks. What works for me, may not work for you, but thank you for your interest in what I do, and I'll tell you - I prefer to do Hatha when I wake up, this is also when I am stiffest. So, I do gentle and slowly expanding asanas. For example, I will first sit or stand and center myself through tadasana, or simple pranayama. Then I may do some slow sun-salutations for overall limbering. Then I often incorporate some side angle stretches or triangle poses. After I am warmed up, I usually do some extended forward bends, and then some extended back bends. I always end with shavasana, and then a seated meditation.

I take breaks throughout the day and do some backbends to remind myself to open the breath, spine, heart, and mind. If I am overly stressed, I try to incorporate some vinyasas in my day. What is now termed "power yoga." I try to end my day with a headstand before I go to bed. I have found this to help my dreamlife.

his hatha practice varies somewhat as to specific poses, but it is a consistent daily

practice. Very importantly, I try to practice the yamas and niyamas to the best of my abilities. I try to pause before a negative action or reaction to see if I can be kinder and gentler to others and to myself. I am not always successful, but I do try. I daily affirm the blessings of life in all of its many forms. I try to bring into my life the 5 stages of a pose : Visualize, flow in, become one, flow out, reflect. I try to stay focused on the task at hand as other demands come and go into my mind. I remind myself to take a deep breath, especially when the waters are rough. I also have a few dear friends who consistently remind me to breathe deep when I forget to...which I do. I encourage questions from the classes I teach and ask for their input often - which keeps my mind open and questioning too. I continue exploring and reading everyday. I reread different translations of ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutra regularly. I read the Bible. I read the Koran. I read the Tao Te Ching. I read spiritual texts that inspire me and that are rich in meaning and take my mind beyond physical limitations.

These are some of the things I do in my daily yoga practice. Thank you for asking, Erin.

Namaste,
Joan

T'ai Chi and QiGong!

Yo Joan,

I am the director of World T'ai Chi & QiGong Day, a worldwide health education event involving tens of thousands around the globe holding mass public T'ai Chi & QiGong exhibitions the Saturday following United Nations World Health Day at 10 am each city's local time. If any of your readers are T'ai Chi or QiGong enthusiasts, they can become part of this historic event (April 8th, 2000) by contacting our website now at www.worldtaichiday.org, and using our FREE organizing kits. If they don't currently have a school or group they can connect with one in their city or country through the same web site.

Bill Douglas, Director of World T'ai Chi & QiGong Day, and author of The Complete Idiot's Guide to T'ai Chi & Qigong

Dear Bill,

Wow! Thanks for all your info, and I look very much forward to reading your book. I am currently taking a T'ai Chi class with my elderly parents. It is outstanding exercise, particularly for the elderly, because they do not have to be getting up and down off the floor as in most yoga classes. The T'ai Chi class is done standing, or one can sit down and do the breathing and arm movements alone. It is a very beneficial work-out and a very enjoyable one in every way. Perhaps you would like to write back, Bill, and tell the Yoyoga readers a brief description of what T'ai Chi is and what QiGong is. What makes them different as exercise? My understanding is that QiGong is not a martial art, while T'ai Chi is. In the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation", we introduce readers to QiGong. I would be interested to hear your introductions and I am sure many yoyoga readers would be too. Hope your write back, Bill, for the next Yoyoga issue, July 15.

Quad your pleasure

Hi Joan!

I just got back from a vacation and can't wait to see your response; they are excellent! I did the quadriceps test that you mentioned and turned out my quadriceps are quite weak, I think. I can tense it but cannot hold it too long. I'll add some more straight leg standing poses on my yoga regimen and let you know how it goes.

And oh, I think I should share with you this story. Let me know what you think about this. While I was in my vacation last week, I was hiccupping so badly. My husband tried to surprise me etc. but nothing can stop my hiccups and I became tired (I mean my stomach and chest muscle literally tired). So I lied down and started to observe my breath, and slowly focused in my mind that my whole muscle is expanding with every inhalation and relaxing with every exhalation. Before long, my hiccups was gone and it was the most amazing feeling! I don't know if it is a pure luck, but now I'm a total believer on relaxation and breathing. Anyway, many thanks for your help. As always, you are an inspiring teacher.

Sincerely,
Mariska Audriani
Plano, Texas

Dear Mariska,

Thank you! I am glad you found the quadriceps test helpful. For readers who may have missed it last week, I have included it in this week's Asana For The Week. Thanks for the breathing testimonial too, Mariska. It's true - breath works!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sponsorship?

Dear Joan,

My regards to you. I am Amarendra Samantaray, a professional yoga teacher have been teaching yoga/meditation since last ten years in Bombay in different health clubs and schools intending to assist you in your yoga classes in US. I need a sponsorship letter in this regards. If you can help me in this matter then kindly let me know through my hotmail ID: a_samantaray@hotmail.com, so that we both can workout on it combinedly. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours truly,
Amarendra Samantaray
YOGACHARYA

Thanks again!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Health benefits

Yo Joan,

Thank you for your excellent and informative website. I am making contact with those who are researching the health benefits of yoga. Do you know of anyone involved in this area? If so, I would appreciate you sending me contact name and address/number.

Yours, in yoga,
Robert Elliott

Dear Robert,

It is difficult separating cult from fiction. For now, I would suggest checking out the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM). This is a relatively new government program that is doing a lot of research in this area. They are located on the internet at: <http://altmed.od.nih.gov/nccam/>. And I am not saying that's not difficult.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

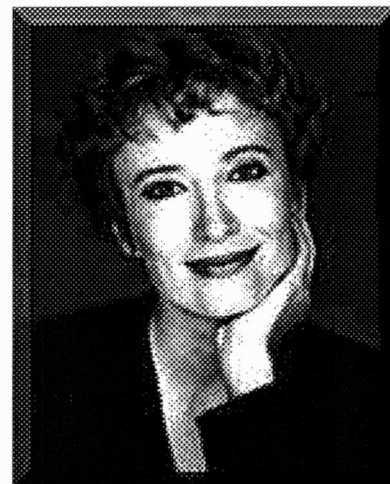
Yo Joan



BLESSED BE!

Dear Joan,

A regular to your site recommended that I e-mail you with a question I've asked plenty with no luck in direction. I am currently studying Kundalini cleansing and I am very interested in joining a Kundalini Yoga class here in the Chicago Area. Curious to know if you know of any schools/classes who are currently teaching this technique. I would greatly appreciate any direction you could give and thank you for such a great website. Wishing you much luck and success in the days to come. .



Catina
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Catina,

I asked, Sharon Steffenson, the editor of Yoga Chicago Newspaper (website is www.yogachicago.com), and she refers Kundalini questions to Shiva Singh Khalsa. He teaches at Global Yoga, in Chicago (the website is: www.globalyogacenter.com). His e-mail is shkhalsa@interaccess.com. I also would recommend a very good book on Kundalini called, "Kundalini Yoga The Flow of Eternal Power," by Shakti Parwha Kaur Khalsa. It is definitely in my yoga library. Let me know if you come across any Kundalini classes in the southwestern suburbs. I'd like to take some!

Namaste,
Joan

Dear Amarendra,

I am not able to help you on this matter, but I am posting your letter in case any Yoyoga readers out there will be able to. All the best wishes for your upcoming sponsorship.

Namaste,
Joan

Attention!

Hi Joan!

ok...

I am 51, male, in better than average cardiovascular condition and very active in team sports. I also coach volleyball and soccer at the high school varsity level. I have had four knee scopes, one shoulder scope, one reconstructive shoulder surgery, a L5-S1 laminectomy, and other minor ones. I'm 5'9" and weigh about 205 (I've been hydrostatically measured as 17-18% body fat but my ideal weight would probably be about 190). I have NEVER been flexible but I'm having more problems with my back and maybe yoga will help. HOWEVER....I'm very HYPER and IMPATIENT and wonder if this will hinder any progress. I guess what I'm asking is in spite of my impatience, should I even try it? I have lived on a military base for over 20 years as a teacher for the military dependents. I'm looking and researching a yoga book and came across this. I cannot jog/run anymore because of the knees but my normal routine is 4-5 days of different aerobic machines at the gym (30-45 minutes) and a 30 minute weight routine twice a week for maint. Seems to work but I love to eat too much and the junk food plus I have a problem with getting up several times in the middle of the night to eat. I figure I have about 1000-1500 extra calories a night. Yes, I know it's a problem but we don't have disorder clinics here. I also realize I don't get a restful sleep and I really look forward to my naps. I guess my age can't handle these routines any longer (I've been getting up like this all my life). Advice on yoga and/or a simple book for VERY tight old jocks? Thanks and I hope the info helps.

Jeff Selditz
the west side of L.A.

Dear Jeff,

And you are certainly a man who knows himself! Wow, that was quite a detailed analysis of your physical self. There is absolutely a direct relationship between the flexibility of your spine and back troubles. It sounds like you are quite strong. Hatha Yoga involves the balance between flexibility and strength. It is easier teaching people who are overly strong than it is teaching people who are overly flexible. Overly strong people tend to be very aware of their physical limitations, overly flexible people are often not aware of their limitations. Either case can end up with injuries. The overly strong, for the very reason they are overly strong, will push themselves to "achieve" something their body is not ready for, and injury will result.

Yoga is not competitive. Achievements are not a part of this process. So, first of all, approach your studies of yoga in this way. You are not trying to "touch your toes." You are becoming aware of the "process" of touching your toes. I have said this so many

times, it is starting to sound cliché to me. Let me say it another way, you are becoming aware of the subtleties of the movement that are often ignored when strength building is the major focus.

You have to change your eating habits. You know this. You must let your body rest at night. You push it during the day. Let it rest at night. It is so used to being in a rajasic state that it may seem like it is telling you it needs food at midnight, etc. But use the self-control you developed in the military to tell your body that you are in control now. You will not feed it at night when your body needs to sleep.

You must now treat your body like a loving child. Be gentle and kind and tell it that it must rest now. Bring shavasana into your practice daily. Try doing shavasana before you go to sleep. You asked for advice on simple books, and I would recommend the simple books I wrote with Eve Adamson on this, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga," and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation." Both books have chapters devoted exclusively for shavasana. You now need to devote some exclusive time to shavasana. You know what you need. At ease, Jeff.

Namaste,
Joan

Overloading the senses is senseless

Yo Joan,

I'm a 25yr old Indian student doing my masters degree in computers. I'm very glad that when we Indians have totally forgotten such a divine science, you are really doing an excellent task in helping the people.

Joan, I have a real problem here and would really be obliged if you suggest me some help. As I have already mentioned I'm a student and I'm really very hard working. But all my hard work and study goes down the drains as I'm not able to remember what I read. Also I have a problem of lack of concentration due to which I take twice the amount of time to do a task. I'm convinced that Yoga is the only permanent cure for these but I lack guidance. Please help.

Anxiously awaiting your reply,
Naresh s. Rautela

Dear Naresh,

First off, try to get more time AWAY from the computer. Have you ever watched what a TV screen looks like when it is taped on television. It has all these waves jumping around on it. It is hard to make sense out of it and very difficult to watch. That is exactly true when you are directly watching the screen too. It is very straining on the eyes and the mind.

It reminds me of an experience I had today. Three people were driving with me in a car. I was the driver, and everyone was giving me different directions on how to get where we were going...and one person was even speaking in Polish! Add heavy traffic and other cars trying to follow my lead....what a strain! I need to spend some extra time

today in quiet meditation to balance my scattered energies and calm myself.

The more stimulus in your life, the more time needed for meditation. Balance. Try adding more time for meditation in your life, Naresh. Computer off... That sounds good! I will take my advise. I am off to Malibu for a few days for a retreat given by the kind and good Rev. Frank Stroud on "Anthony Demello and sprituality." I'll catch you when I return in a couple weeks, Aug 1. Computer off till then.

Namaste,
Joan

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

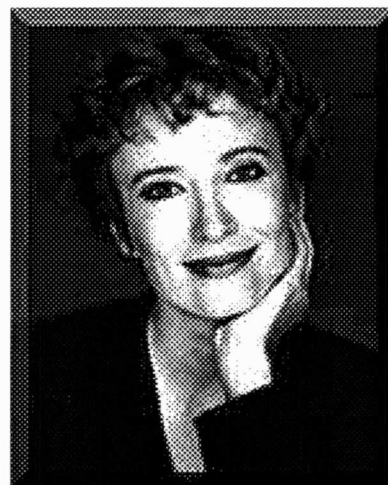
Yo Joan



It's OK to be angry, Buddy!

Dear Joan,

Hello, my name is Chris Gonzales. I started doing yoga several months ago. I also practice the "Transcendental Meditation" technique. I recently read in a health magazine about these swami's who would practice yoga for three hours in the morning, followed by meditation for an hour or so. I would also like to extend my meditation and yoga program as well. The problem is, I find that if I go over an hour of yoga, and two, twenty-minute sessions of my T.M. practice, I become irritable, stressed out, and angry.



If what I read was true, then why is it that these swami's can do more yoga and meditation and not feel irritable. Obviously it's a negative thing if you're feeling angry and irritable. How do they get away with it?

Signed, ambitious, but cautious,
Chris Gonzales
Hamburg, New Jersey

Dear Chris,

Eve Adamson and I penned a little poem in our books, "Feeling down, move around. Feeling great, meditate." Hatha yoga has the ability of freeing your emotions. Sometimes these emotions are hardly peaceful and loving. Sometimes they are angry and irritable. Through steady hatha practice you begin to clearly see the intimate connection between body and mind. If you are feeling angry and irritable after your hatha practice, I would not recommend meditation. I would save your meditation practice for the times you are feeling more calm and settled.

It is not at all abnormal to sometimes be irritable after hatha practice. Many people have

significant stresses in their lives, and a session of hatha does not change that. Over time, with consistent practice, you will feel less irritable. Feelings are not to be rushed. The release leading to a peaceful state, that happens through hatha practice and meditation, is sincere. It is not a phony cover up, like a smile plastered over discontentment. The peaceful feelings that eventually come are sincere and deep seated. Because they are deep, this state of being takes time to realize. There are practices other than meditation for the times you are irritable. For the irritable times, try working with an extended shavasana. Watch your body begin to relax. Or simply watch the movement of your breath. Do not think of this as 'meditation.' Think of this as a simple exercise of deepening awareness.

Lastly, Chris, remember that it is the discipline of practice that leads to a peaceful state of being. The more disciplined the practice, the less interrupted the peaceful state becomes. However, here is the catch, the practice is not goal orientated. Once you set up goals (like peacefulness) on what you want to accomplish, you set up a "desire." Yoga is about ridding yourself of desires, for desires lead to discontentment. This sure does appear like a riddle, so I'll end now with a poem by Rumi...a persian poet: "Last night I asked an old wise man to tell me all the secrets of the universe. He murmured softly in my ear, 'This cannot be told, but only learned.'"

Namaste,
Joan

Counter point

Hi Joan!

I understand that when putting together a yoga routine, it is important to do counter postures after certain poses. I have always wondered whether back bends should be done before forward bends or the other way around? Also when doing a complete yoga routine including forward bends, back bends, side bends, twists, inverted poses and balancing poses; in what order would you recommend they be done? Thank you!

Namaste...
Ede
Nashua, NH

Dear Ede,

A general rule of thumb is that backbends energize and forward bends quiet. Backbends externalize, forward bends internalize. Once I was in an all night yoga class. Around 3 AM, when everybody was zonked, we started working on backbends. Talk about a resurgence of energy! I remember starting to laugh in a backbend and not being able to stop for sometime!!

There are so many ways of putting together a 'routine.' So, it is very hard for me to answer this question. I suggest not making it a 'routine.' Simply continue exploring the postures individually with thorough concentration. If you really think a routine will help your discipline, then I would suggest sun-salutations on a regular basis. The ebb and

flow of the forward and backward movements, in this vinyasa, is perfectly balanced. Also, consider taking an ashtanga class (power yoga). This type of practice is very specific in its order of postures. The Shivananda school of yoga also tends to be very specific in the sequence of postures studied.

I hope you find these responses helpful, Ede.

Namaste,
Joan

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com

Copyright © 1999 Joan Budilovsky

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

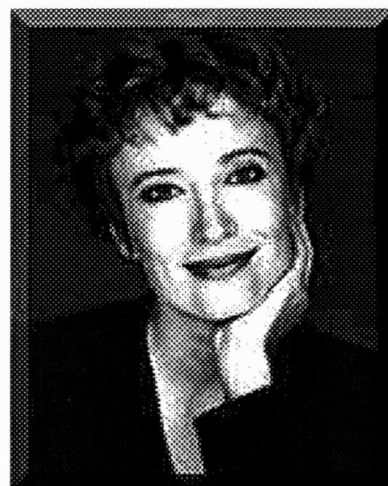
Yo Joan



It's time to lighten up

Dear Joan,

Thank you for your insight. It's true, I've had a strong desire for "enlightenment". It's time to forget about the end result and just follow through with the practice religiously. There is one question I have Joan- does "enlightenment" mean that you have finally arrived at the most supreme state of consciousness or does it never end?



Namaste,
Chris Gonzales
Hamburg, N.J.

Dear Chris,

Gee, Chris, it would be pretty presumptuous for me to answer that one! There is a beautiful zen poem that studies this question so well, "Before I was enlightened, I saw a tree. After I was enlightened, I saw a tree."

As for me, I always did prefer a room with a view.

Namaste,
Joan

Oldie but Goodie

-ii Joan!

What a wonderful web page!!! Thank you. I will come back often for the Asana for the week, and everything else. I am a beginner to Yoga. I am presently working with Bryan Kest's video series. And though I know Yoga has been around for a long, long time...I feel as though I have discovered a new, wonderful gift!

Thanks again for a great page.
Melanie

Dear Melanie,

Everything old is new again! Thanks to you, Melanie!

**Namaste,
Joan**

New Classes

Dear Joan

I found your name in the local yellow pages and got your web address from your voicemail. Are all your classes only held at COD? If not, is there an alternative schedule and location? We both work, so we'd optimally be looking for either evening or weekend classes.

Thanks for your help! I look forward to your response!
Meg Snyder Elmhurst, IL

Dear Meg,

Thanks for your letter. Unfortunately, the only classes I will be teaching in the Fall are on Mon. and Wed. mornings through the College of Dupage PE Dept. New classes start in mid Sept. and registration is happening at the college as we write. My writing schedule has become very full and has caused me to limit my teaching schedule. The college does offer other beginning yoga classes, with other teachers, at other times through the Continuing Education dept. There is also a yoga studio in Downers Grove called "Yoga Among Friends" which offers classes every day of the week and may be able to fit into your schedule better. Their number is 585-4650.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Varicose Veins

Hi Joan!

I have a "medical" question for you. I know it's not your area of expertise but I'm running out of ideas and you are so worldly and knowledgeable. Ever since I started practicing yoga my body had been giving me trouble. It's been 2 years now, but still my limbs fall asleep in a pose. My biggest complaint is varicose veins. I have one on my ankle and in my shin. They drive me crazy. And now my hips feel like they are possibly pinching a nerve and my legs will feel tingly through out the day. I know, it's a big list. I'm distressed because I felt fine physically before ever doing yoga. I started practicing for my mental well being. I am definitely much happier and would never stop doing it. I can't see how it would be related but I don't know what else it could be. I haven't made any other changes in the last 2 years. I am in good shape. Always have been active. I eat right. My usual workout is 30 minutes of cardio on a stationary bike (could be the culprit?) and then 30 min of yoga. I also do weights. I'm only 32 and too young to be falling apart. I have asked several yoga instructors and nothing comes of it. It's a circulation "thing" one said. My doctor is not too receptive to yoga. I was thinking of seeing a massage therapist but money is an issue. Without giving me a physical :) do you think you can help me? Thank you for this opportunity in my quest for well being.

Peace,
Julie
Mesa, Az

Dear Julie,

I hardly consider myself "worldly." I do consider myself "Chicagoanly." For readers who are not familiar with varicose veins, these are veins of the legs that are damaged and enlarged due to stagnant blood from improper vein valve functioning. Numerous factors can cause varicose veins, including hereditary factors, diet, posture, etc. Have you ever considered acupuncture treatments, Julie? A series of treatments can improve circulation and vein functioning. The acupuncturist inserts very tiny needles into key energy points on the body. You will hardly feel it. However, if done properly, the results will be quite noticeable, particularly after a series of sessions. You state that money is an issue - many insurance companies are now covering acupuncture. I would not suggest traditional swedish massage for varicose veins. In fact, I would avoid massaging varicose veins. First, reduce any possible blood clots through acupuncture and a low-fat, high fluid diet.

You state in your letter, "I felt fine physically before ever doing yoga. I started practicing for my mental well being. I am definitely much happier and would never stop doing it. I can't see how it would be related but I don't know what else it could be." I am here to tell you that it may very well be your hatha yoga practice! Perhaps you are holding bound postures too long? Discontinue Lotus Pose, where the ankles are sitting cross-legged on top of your thighs. Listen more closely to what your body is telling you. If certain poses are causing your body to become numb and painful...STOP! Not every pose is appropriate for every body. Stop, look, listen...then listen some more.

Inverted poses can make it easier for venous blood to return to the heart for cleansing. For this reason, I would experiment with bringing more inverted poses into your hatha practice. Poses like headstand and shoulderstand, or try simply lying back on the floor

and resting your legs up against a wall. See how this feels. Stop if it is painful or numbing your legs more. Work gradually with your body. Work with your body, not against it. Since yoga is a study of body and mind, I encourage you to continue your practice and bring the body more into it. Your mind is becoming happier...wonderful! As you clearly see, now it's time for the body to catch up.

Namaste,
Joan

Cool Kundalini

Dear Joan,

I just wanted to let you know that I picked up that Kundalini Yoga book that you mentioned in your last news letter. I really enjoy reading it and I look forward to trying it out-I also picked up a tape called Kundalini Yoga with Grace and Strength. It looks great. I was checking out the website for Yogi Bhajan and it looks like there is a Kundalini certified Yogi in Villa Park. The web site is great-I just wanted to let you know. Take care-and I will talk to you later....

Namaste,
Judi Kukula
Illinois

Dear Judi,

I checked out Yogi Bhajan's site and I liked it too. Check it out yoyogis! It's at:
<http://www.yogibhajan.com>.

Namaste,
Joan

Quiet please

DEAR JOAN,

MANY THANKS FOR THE ANSWER. SOMETIMES I GET DIZZY TRYING TO DO THE BREATHING IS THAT NORMAL. AM I TRYING TOO HARD? I CAN'T GET MY STOMACH TO GO IN ON THE INHALE. I STILL LOVE IT.

THANKS,
BONNIE

Dear Bonnie,

Are you aware that when you cap everything you are yelling? Could that be part of your BREATHING PROBLEM? If yes, you are trying too hard. Relax. If you get dizzy while you are doing the breathing, you are doing something wrong. Perhaps you are hyperventilating? The abdomen should rise on the inhale, you mention the stomach going in? It's really hard for me to respond more specifically without seeing what you are doing. Ask your yoga teacher. If you do not have one, find one. Someone who can physically observe what you are doing. Above all, please relax, Bonnie. I am glad you LOVE IT still, but slow down and relax some more so you will LOVE IT longer.

**Namaste,
Joan**

To invert or not to invert? That is the question.

Dear Joan!

I'm pretty new to yoga and I've read that you shouldn't do certain asana's during your menstrual cycle. I've also read books that don't mention anything about it. So, I was wondering what I should avoid doing during this time. And more importantly WHY?

Thanks for you help.
Namaste,
Kim Fitch
Hollywood California

Dear Kim,

I really don't get too bent out of shape (no pun intended) worrying about this. I have heard that inversions (upside-down postures) are to be avoided during the menstrual period because reversing the pressure on blood flow at this time could be detrimental to the free flow of the menstrual cycle. However, I did inversions for many years before I heard inversions should be avoided at certain times and I never suffered adversely from inversions. I think it is an individual body's decision. If you have menstrual or reproductive problems, then I would avoid headstands or any inversions during the time of your menstrual period.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hello up there?

Dear Joan,

I am exploring a branch of Indian astrology (Jyotish) called Nadisastra. This refers to divinatory writings, predictive far into the future of the lives of individuals destined to have a reading. These writings, often written on a surface such as palm leaf, are attributed to great sages (often Vedic), such as Bhrigu, Shuka, Agasthya, and some to deities like Shiva, Ganesha, Surya, Nandi, Meenakshi, Rajeswari. There are a good many other naadis, often very little known - e.g., Shukra, Druva, Amsa, Kousika, Koumara, Kakbhusandi, Bhoga, Pullipani, Vashista, Vishwamitra, Parasara, Sahadeva, Kashyapa ...

Some collections I have personally spent a lot of time exploring. I have also entered a vast correspondence with many people (mostly Indian or overseas resident Indian) who have had readings from various nadi collections in various parts of India. Already, I have collective weighty evidence that some naadis are astonishingly accurate. One question is to what extent some nadi readers consciously inject something of their own into a reading. Another concerns well-meaning but inaccurate translation. One area which needs extensive research into Tamil history is why nadi jyothisham, mainly in regard to the Agasthya tradition, is so highly organised and widespread in Tamil Nadu.

This best case accuracy is true of the predictions for one's future, but there is more than this. One's nadi can be identified and brought from a naadi library (which are in the keeping of traditional families who strictly hold on to them) by means, e.g., only of the taking of an intending subject's thumb print (female, left; male, right), or by the measuring of one's shadow.

Observing some fundamental rules of empirical validation, I have been able, a great many times, to confirm that by such means alone, a subject can find a reading in his or her own name(s), date of birth, parent name(s), spouse's name, uniquely referring bio-data. There is past life and future life (if any) data. One way of confirming past life material is to compare a subject's readings in different nadi traditions.

I should point out, too, that fraudulence - sometimes highly expert - is also encountered in some places, and my work has been able to document various methods by which this is effected).

Another question is whether - and if so, to what degree - a great sage (past or present) could manage to be so incredibly correct in being able to predict at such a profound level. Was astrology the means? Or was it superabundant yogic power?

To assist my study (which is a long-term one), I trust you will be able (as so many respondents have already so tremendously well done) to let me know any thoughts, findings, experiences, and also pass my query to to friends, associates, etc.

Barry Pittard (Australia)

Email: bpittard@beachaccess.com.au

Snailmail: c/o McIvor, Hunchy Road, Hunchy. Queensland. Australia 4555.

Dear Barry,

Whew! I sure can not help you out on this one, Barry! I am posting your letter in case there are some Yoyoga readers out there who can help you. My experience with vedic strolgy is minimal. I find it fascinating, but it is way over my head (pun intended).

Namaste,
Joan

Breathing problems

Hi Joan!

I just recently started practicing yoga and I still have a lot to learn. But already, I've run into a snag with the breathing and I can't seem to find an answer in any of my resources (books and videos mainly). Due to allergies and sinus trouble, I've been a mouth-breather all my life. Needless to say, the breathing exercises are difficult for me and take immense amounts of concentration. I know that over time, this will be less of a problem for me with regular practice of the breathing exercises. I'm wondering though how to handle my breathing while practicing the asanas. Should I concentrate more on breathing through my nose, worrying less about the asana? Or should I concentrate on the regularity of my breathing (even if it's through my mouth) and the proper positioning of the posture? I should also mention that I am overweight, and that also effects my breathing in some of the postures. Thank you for your help.

Theresa
Killeen, Texas

Dear Theresa,

I once asked my father the secret to his long life. He replied "Keep breathing." He is so wise. Theresa, dear, breathe through your mouth in the asanas. Focus on the positioning and find a sense of peace in the pose. Slow the breath down. Do not force. Don't force anything! For your specific concerns, I would suggest practicing your breathing through the nose only at times when your body is quiet, seated, and relaxed. As it becomes easier, then bring it into your hatha practice. There is no rush. Until you feel comfortable, it's absolutely alright to breathe through your mouth, Theresa. Your heart will thank you, and I thank you.

Namaste,
Joan

There's hope at the end of the tailbone

Hi Joan!

Hi Joan.. and thanks for getting back with me! Most people would just blow it off, you know what I mean!! Anyway.. I live in a small rural town in southeastern NM called Artesia. That is approximately 225 miles from Albuquerque, and 250 miles from El Paso, TX. I suffer from chronic back pain and am trying to consider different options than what I have now. I have read some about this.. and was thinking the relaxation may help with the chronic pain.. if I can just figure out how to do it. I know that some of these

positions may be hard for me.. considering I have 2 discs in my neck.. and 3 discs in my back that are not normal.. but would like to try anyway. I have also considered acupuncture. Not that I would be thrilled with having needles put in my back.. but you finally reach a point that you will try anything to make the pain go away for just a while! Thank you for replying and you have a real good evening, and I look forward to the merchandise that I ordered!

Hurting in New Mexica

Dear Hurting,

Thank you for your order of tapes, and thank you for your question. You are on the right road to be considering acupuncture. I personally know of many people who have been significantly helped by this form of energy work. One person I know suffered severe back pain from a car accident and went to numerous medical specialists with no pain relief. She finally turned to acupuncture out of a desperate attempt to try anything to reduce the constant pain. Through a series of treatments that lasted a few months, she was completely cured of her back pain. She is now a strong supporter of acupuncture. Acupuncture is now also recognized by many insurance companies. If you can not find an Acupuncturist in your area, then try accupressure. It is a form of massage referred to as "Shiatsu." Shiatsu does not apply the use of needles as in acupuncture. Instead, the pressure of thumbs are placed at energy points and held for a period of time to open and unblock key energy points along the body.

Regarding the tapes you have ordered, "Breathworks" and "Shavasana" are particularly good for you to work with everyday. When lying on the floor in Shavasana, place pillows under the knees and/or under the head for comfort to your back and neck. If it is still uncomfortable to lie on your back, then lie on your side and place pillows between your legs and under your head. Make yourself as comfortable as possible. Shavasana can also be done seated, although lying down may help you to better ease the gravitational pressure on your spine, provided you find the proper and comfortable way to lie down. I have searched for yoga teachers in your area, but have only been able to come as close as Santa Fe. Perhaps a local hospital or health club could direct you to someone closer?

Above all, I encourage you to continue to be hopeful in finding answers to easing your pain. I have heard far too many stories and seen far too many examples of people who have truly and successfully worked through their pain. And someday soon, I expect you to be writing and speaking to others and encouraging them in how you worked through your pain. Sometimes (usually) we have to get to a desperate point to find the change. We have to be totally and utterly sick of the pain. Only then do we get out of the passenger seat and climb into the driver's seat and say "Hey Pain! I'm the one driving now!!!" It takes hard work and you are prepared and ready to do this work. That's the beginning of true recovery. You can do it. I absolutely, without reservation, KNOW you can.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



1999 classes

Dear Joan,

Do you have any classes on the weekends or at night? I work during the day, but would like to join your yoga classes.

Thanks!
Bill and Karen
Illinois



Dear Bill and Karen,

The only classes I will be teaching in the Fall are on Mon. and Wed. mornings through the College of Dupage Physical Education Dept. I hope you both can join!

Namaste,
Joan

Where to start?

Hi Joan!

Hi! I'm from St. Louis, MO and I recently bought the book, "The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga" and enjoy it very much. My problem is I don't really know where to begin. I am about 30 pounds overweight

and suffer from bouts of anxiety, so I'm hoping that Yoga may be just the ticket to help with both. Right now I don't have the extra money to join a class, so I am hoping that you might be able to suggest a "routine" to begin with. Since I have the book I mentioned previously, maybe there is something in there? I just need some beginners advice to get started. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,
Donna
St. Louis, MO

Dear Donna,

How about opening the book and turning to page one? There are various ways to start your yoga practice. Most people start with the yoga postures and enjoy them so much that they become interested in the philosophy. As you will notice, the back of the book has several posture "routines" with varying time lengths. The best advice I can give you now, Donna, is to simply start reading. Creating a routine will become easier as you experience more. Have fun!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Asanas

Dear Joan

As long as you present your email address, I'd like to ask if you will continue to present different positions each week? The past two weeks have been the same. I and my wife are new (3 months) to yoga and enjoy it.

Thanks
RON

Dear Ron,

I change the asanas on the first and the 15th of the month - twice a month. Aug 1, was extended spinal twist. Aug 15, was triangle. That's the best I can do for now. I am happy to hear you and your wife are starting this new venture together! That's wonderful!!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Cardio yoga

Hi Joan!

I have never taken a yoga class and know very little about it. I am interested in learning it. Where can I find classes (I live in Downers Grove) or find a tape? I think the easiest thing for me to start is with a video tape. Could you please suggest one and where I could find one? Can I get any cardiovascular improvement from yoga? I am off from my usual routine due to a back injury and thought this may be a low impact way to stay in shape.

Thanks!
Amy Glawe
Downers Grove, Illinois

Dear Amy,

Since you live nearby, Amy, I have a series of videotapes available for check-out through the College of Dupage library. If you are not a member yet of this library, it is worthwhile to apply for a community membership. It is a VERY extensive library. All of my audio tapes and books are also available through the College of DuPage Library and in their bookstore. Since it's been a long time since I have watched yoga videos on the market, I am not the best person for advice on what to purchase. I did view Yoga Journal's series of video tapes a few years ago. I liked them very much.

Regarding cardio-yoga, perhaps you have heard of the term, "Power Yoga?" It is a new term for an old style of yoga practice. This style of yoga involves a steady flow of increasingly difficult postures. It is an exceptional cardiovascular work out. Since this particular practice can be quite challenging, and you state you have back problems, I would not recommend it specifically for you, Amy. However, I would recommend it for people who do not have back problems and are looking for an exceptional cardiovascular work-out. Numerous classes are springing up in this recently popularized style of yoga.

Regarding classes, the College of Dupage offers many different yoga classes. I would suggest for you, Amy, some beginning hatha (yoga of balance) yoga classes. Classes begin mid September. Also there is a new yoga studio in Downers Grove called "Yoga Among Friends" which offers classes every day of the week. The local YMCA and Park District also offers classes. There are numerous martial arts studios in the area which are now offering yoga classes too. Go to one class with an instructor before registering for a series of classes. You mention you have a back problem, so you need an instructor who is knowledgeable of your concerns. Ask questions before enrolling. Seek and ye shall find yoga!

Namaste,
Joan

High School Studies

Dear Joan,

First of all, I want to tell you that I have bought and read all three of your "Complete Idiot's Guides" and they all rank among my favorite books of all time! Thanks to you, I now get a monthly massage, practice meditation twice daily, and do a half-hour yoga session with a video 4 days a week. However, I have a few questions about yoga and the spiritual path in general (I know you deal more with hatha yoga, which is more physical than spiritual, in your work, but I thought I'd see if you could help me anyway)

(By the way, just so you know, I will be fourteen years old in October)

1. I have a hard time waking up early in order to do the meditation practice that I'm committed to, even though I love doing it once I'm up. I go to bed at 9:15 and TRY to wake up at 5:50. However, it's extremely difficult. I often find myself turning off the alarm and falling right back asleep, and later I don't even remember the alarm going off at all! Sometimes, when I really commit myself to waking up early and tell myself firmly as I fall asleep that I WILL get up at 5:50, I get up with no problem. Should I do that every night? Or would I do better with one of those "natural" alarm clocks that simulates a sunrise for 20 minutes and culminates in gentle beeping?

Joan's response: Commit yourself firmly to getting up at 5:50AM when you fall asleep. This appears to work for you. I have one of those alarm clocks that chimes a bell slowly.. The bell gradually increases in the speed and number of chimes till eventually I have to, and want to, turn it off to stop the chiming. It works for me. I find it better than waking up to the tragic news.

2. As I mentioned, I'm in my early teens. I will be starting high school in a week and, to be perfectly honest, I'm not really looking forward to it. In middle school, I was very hard on myself and demanded perfection in all my classes. I spent a lot of time doing homework in advance and doing extra credit work. The end result was always a report card full of A's and A pluses. HOWEVER, I DO NOT want to do that same routine in high school. My plan is to take only one honors course and the rest "regular" courses (even though I was recommended for all honors courses), and to talk to my guidance counselor about using some of my periods for study hours after I've fulfilled the required credits. Well, that's all well and good, but I still have this totally ridiculous wish that I could just skip high school, not clog my brain with a bunch of useless information, and instead go to a Buddhist college or train to be a yoga teacher or go to India to find a guru. It doesn't help that my friends at school are totally unreceptive to yoga, vegetarianism, meditation, massage, spirituality, or anything else I'm interested in. They don't make fun of me or anything but they have no interest whatsoever in any of these topics. I was wondering if you have any sage advice on how to enjoy high school.

Joan's response: You can train to be a yoga teacher while you are in high school. Check out some teacher training schools in your area. There are many programs in California. The schools are usually at times that are agreeable to a full time student or full time employee. DO NOT DROP OUT OF SCHOOL. I am a college professor. I believe our educational system has a lot to offer, as frustrating as it may appear sometimes. I too get frustrated, but high school is still the path you should be on at this time in your life. DO NOT drop out of school, rather explore how you can continue to add your yoga studies to your high school experience. I think it is great that you are in honors classes. If there is some way to continue on in those, I would suggest it. Perhaps you can even eventually offer yoga classes at your high school? I know many students would love that

3. Another thing about high school: this one is time-related. When school starts, I will only have one hour and ten minutes to devote to spiritual practices in the morning before I leave for school. I plan to use it for cleaning my teeth, face, and eyes, meditating, chanting with my mala beads, doing affirmations, and doing a LOT of different prayers which I've chosen that speak to me. I really wanted to fit in some yoga or breathing into this time, but all the stuff that I said above fills up every minute of my time. I will be doing yoga along with meditation and acupressure and reflexology in the evening, after school and homework, by

the way. And I'll probably do some breathing exercises in the car on the way to school. So I'm really squeezing my time for all it's worth. But I was wondering if you know of any ways in which I could simplify my spiritual practices while still "growing" in a spiritual sense, or if there are certain practices which are more basic and essential than others.

Joan's response: WOW! You sure to pack a spiritual wallop into your day! Wonderful! You ask, "ways in which I could simplify my spiritual practices while still "growing" in a spiritual sense." The way to simplify is simply to simplify. Try picking one of your spiritual practices and sticking with it for the morning and evening. If you like to experiment with more than one, try changing to a different practice each month. It is the quality of your practice, not the quantity that matters. So for example, if it is mantra for Sept mornings, then try meditation for October mornings, breathing for November mornings, etc. Eventually you will find ways of combining them. For now though, concentrate on one practice and develop it slowly and consistently.

4. This problem can be summed up in one word: money. I baby-sit and get an allowance, and I tend to spend all of the money I receive soon after I've gotten it. I feel like I'm addicted to buying. I've even gone into my savings which I intended to use after college to buy things. My savings has now dwindled down to \$500, while at one point it was \$1200. My new plan is to start saving again, little by little, putting 10% of all I earn into that savings account. I really hope I can do this -- I'm not too sure because material items always look so tempting! The weirdest part of this problem is the actual things that I'm blowing all my money on. It's spiritual books, transformational tapes, malas, prayer wheels, precious stones, tibetan prayer bells, etc. Books are especially my weakness. And the bad part is, sometimes I buy books and then don't read them, or if I read them, I often don't digest them and put their ideas into practice. There are just so many spiritual books on the market! Do you have any advice for me?

Joan's response: I have the same problem with books. I buy many more than I am able to read. I am taking a speed-reading course in Sept. Might this be a suggestion for you? Regarding the other items, refer to your earlier question about simplifying. Concentrate on one practice, or one item to help in your meditative practice (one prayer wheel in Sept., one stone in Oct....). And simply refrain from buying anything more. It sounds like you have enough for now.

5. OK, one last problem, I promise! I haven't mentioned this yet, but I was first introduced to yoga in a psychiatric hospital. I was there for two weeks because I had anorexia. I was 5'1.5" and I weighed 80 pounds. This was last January. I'm pretty much "all better" now, I weigh 98 pounds, and I eat enough, even though I've chosen to be vegan. However, I sometimes eat a lot of extra snacks. It's like once I've started I can't stop. I've eaten 2 bowls of beans and rice, two bowls of oat bran cereal, and 2 slices of sourdough bread in an afternoon. I've also eaten 10 slices of sourdough bread, or a hummus sandwich on raisin bread, a nectarine, and two bowls of oat cereal. These binges have all happened on baby-sitting jobs, so added to my guilt at how much I've eaten is the guilt of eating another's food while I'm supposed to be watching their child. Another trend are that I tend to crave carbohydrates.

Joan's response: I am not an expert on anorexia and the recovery process. I do know that the study of yoga involves ahimsa or non-violence. I would suggest reading up on this yama of restraint and see how it applies to your eating. Perhaps when you feel like binging, write your thoughts down. How are you feeling? Why are you feeling the need to binge? See if you can find a connection between the times you binge. Perhaps they all happen at times your self-esteem is low? At those times, read the bhagavad gita. Read one of your spiritual books, or turn to your spiritual practice that you are developing for that month. Awareness. Developing your awareness is what this practice is about.

Whew! Those are all my problems. As I write, I notice a theme of lack of self-discipline and moderation in these problems, which I know are two important parts of yoga. I'm sorry that I wrote such a long letter -- you don't have to answer all the questions if you're really busy. However, I will appreciate SO SO MUCH any answer you can give me, anytime you can. You don't know how much I think of you, and knowing

that you actually read my letter will make me very very happy. Of course, actually getting some advice from you would be even better!

Joan's response: I have time for you. I am honored that you have taken so much of your time to write out your concerns to me. You are very articulate and I hope you will be taking some honors courses in writing or english because you have a beautiful way of expressing yourself that will do you very well in your life.

Thanks for your wonderful books. You are my inspiration. Even though I haven't heard your advice on my specific problems yet, I've found lots of comfort and suggestions that can be applied to my problems in your books. Thanks in advance for reading and replying to me.

Joan: It is your beautiful, honest energy that inspires me.

Namaste,
Shannon

Mountain View, California

P.S. -- You can edit and shorten this letter if you want to put it on your website, if you want

I do not want, it is all here....jb

P.P.S. -- I adore your website!

I adore you!...jb

P.P.P.S. -- What book are you working on now, if any?

I am working on a new yoga book that is in the development stages. I will let you know when it is nearer to completion, Shannon. Thank you for asking!

Namaste,
Joan

Insomnia

DEAR JOAN,

I HAVE TROUBLE SLEEPING. WHAT ARE SOME GOOD YOGA TIPS TO CURE MY INSOMNIA.

THANKS,
BONNIE
MICHIGAN

Dear Bonnie,

If you are stressed do some sun salutations followed by a series of slow forward bends. Do shavasana immediately before sleeping. Do not eat anything for at least 6 hours before going to sleep. Sweet dreams...

Namaste,
Joan

Futile attempts

Dear Joan!

I have made a few futile attempts at Tai Chi and Yoga. I experience a lot of bronchial problems although I have not been diagnosed with asthma. I practice reverse breathing which stimulates the intercostal muscles of the ribcage. Here and there I have heard that Yoga "relieves asthma". How so? Is there any single tape or book you can recommend on the subject. What about a series of asana's?

Sincerely,
Jay Polatnick

Dear Jay,

Yoga can give you "techniques" to work effectively with asthma. Certain yoga breathing postures can be very effective in helping to reduce the panic that often accompanies an asthma (or asthma like) attack. For example, counting your breath and trying to extend the exhale to inhale can naturally work to calm the body. I realize this is very difficult to do though when the breath is out of control. This is why it is important to study ways of working with the breath to bring these techniques into practice at difficult times. The more often you practice, the more natural these techniques become. The easier it becomes to turn to them in times of need. A book or class in Kundalini Yoga, which focuses exercises on the breath, you may find most helpful, Jay.

Breath control is a VERY important aspect of the yoga study. In yoga, the life-force is referred to as "prana." The way to physically work with the life force is through the breath. Hatha (means balance) Yoga (means union) This balanced practice of uniting the body and mind strengthens and deepens the breath, as it tones and strengthens the rest of the body. This in turn, paves the way for a healthier life.

Namaste,
Joan

You are special

Dear Joan,

I am interested in yoga because I have pains in my hip. My left hip is slightly lower than my right hip. Wondering if you work with people on special problems in your classes?

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

So many special people come to my classes and bring with them their special attributes and problems. I try my best as a teacher. (I work with my attributes and problems in the yoga classes I attend as a student.) My classes are quite large, usually over 30 in each class. The amount of time I can spend individually with each person is limited in a 50 minute class. Do you know what your hip pain stems from? Have you been checked by your doctor? Is it arthritis, surgery, sciatica, scoliosis, etc., or simply the placement of your hips. In yoga class we work to help our alignment of bones and muscles. In meditation, we work to manage pain. I believe yoga could be quite helpful for you, whatever your physical ailment stems from.

Namaste,
Joan

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@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

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipes	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

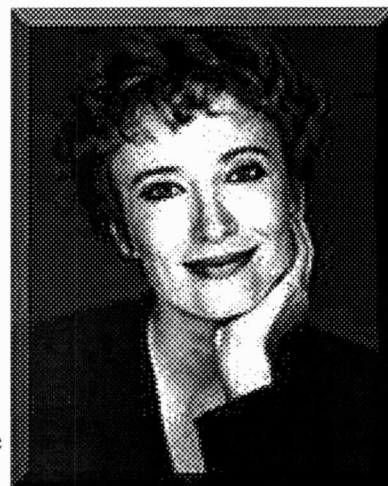
Yo Joan



Yo Teach

Dear Joan,

Hello - I have a question and I am hoping you are able to help me. I practice yoga - I am by no means an expert - but an experienced beginner. I am moving to a small town soon and from talking to people have found that there are a lot of people in this community who would be interested in yoga courses. I was wondering what qualifications a person needs to teach yoga? Are there certifications that are needed? I purchased the book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga*, (where I got your web site) to learn more about the history and origins. It is an excellent book for reference. I am interested in possibly becoming certified, if needed, so that I could teach a community yoga class. I would not want to teach unless I was sure I was qualified to do so.



Any help you have on the subject would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Erika A. Spina
Wilson, NY

Dear Erika,

Currently there are not national certifications for yoga instructors. Certifications range from a few classes in aerobics teacher certifications to yoga programs involving years of study. There is a national yoga organization trying to set standards for yoga instructors. I have reservations in this. I understand the quest for standards, but certification is a mixed bag. Yoga is an internal study. It involves application of the principles studied. How does one certify in this? It is more than academics. How does one become certified in peace and love? I do not know. I applaud the efforts. I have sincere reservations about

certification of yoga instructors.

My suggestion, study with a yoga program you will learn from. Study with a yoga program that YOU will grow from in every level of your being. Teach when you have something to offer. Do not let money motivate your actions for teaching. Let the joy of what you have studied and learned motivate you. Continue to study as you teach. Continue to be a student as you become a teacher.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Crow

Dear Joan,

In the Crane/Crow posture, should the knees be underneath the armpits? I'm getting different direction in this asana from different sources. If you have a minute, please respond. Thanks...love your website!

Thanks,
Bernie M.

Dear Bernie,

There are various ways of experiencing this asana. The approach I use, is to place the knees underneath the armpits and then to balance forward as you lift the feet off the floor.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Where to start

Dear Joan

I'm wondering how much harm would it do for me to practice when it's been less than two hours since I ate? I'm fairly new to yoga (6 months) and I don't quite understand why there is this waiting period.

Also, I know that you answered this question recently, but I can't remember your response. What poses are safe when you are menstruating? I've heard you shouldn't do any inverted, backbends or vigorous standing poses, but which are those? For instance, is Downward Dog considered a inverted pose because my head is below my heart or do they only mean poses like the headstand. Why would it hurt to do a pose such as Cobra during your menstruation? .

9/15/99

Namaste,
Theresa

Dear Theresa,

It is best to wait at least an hour after eating to practice the yoga asanas. I prefer to practice in the morning, after fasting overnight. Depending on your constitution, and how quickly you digest your food, the period of time may differ. It is different for everyone on appropriate times to practice after eating. If you find during your practice, that the pancakes you ate are making their presence well known, then you are practicing too soon after eating.

Your second question, inverted poses, where the pelvic area is above the heart are suggested to be avoided during menstruation. However, I have taught and been to numerous yoga classes where it has not been an issue with me. Unless you are someone who has difficulties at this time of the month, I would not worry about it. After all, who wants to talk about this in a class of women and men as you go through the asanas? It is a personal time. I do not consider downward dog a problem at menstruation times. The pelvic area is still below the heart. Always remember though, yoga is an internal study. If something does not feel right, come out of it. Even if everyone in the class is staying in a certain pose, it may not be right for you. SO if it is not right, come out of it and simply take some slow breaths. Honor your body at every time of the month.

The last question, The only archive of "Yo Joan" questions exists in a little book I published called "Yo Joan" available in the Yoyoga Bookstore. It includes questions from my first two years of publication ('96 &'97). I have been trying for years to get my dear friend and webmaster Kathie to open a section on this site as an archive. If you are interested in seeing this get done, write her at kat@orbitel.com. Perhaps social pressure ..ill work!

Namaste,
Joan

Keeping abreast of the situation

Hi Joan!

I'm praying you can help me. I do some yoga, although I admit I haven't done it in awhile. I'm 16, and well, basically, I'm very skinny but have very large breasts. They make me very self conscious. I friend of mine mentioned something about a yoga exercise that may firm the breasts. Is this true? Even if it only works a little, it would be great! Please send me any details that you may have, and thank you...

Thank you
Sally Watts

Dear Sally,

9/15/99

Yoga is an internal study that often manifests externally. For example, Plough Pose stimulates the stomach, spleen, gall bladder and kidneys. In the process of compressing these organs, they are stimulated and massaged as the pose is released or extended. Stimulating the stomach tones the area of the stomach. This will result in a healthier stomach. A healthier stomach results in better digestion. Better digestion results in a brighter complexion. A brighter complexion stimulates circulation for better muscle tone....and so it goes. It is a study from the inside out.

So, regarding your question, and with deepest respect, since the breasts exist in the area of the heart and the lungs, the focus would be in developing the heart and the lungs. Find yoga poses that help you open your heart and breath. Bring the focus internal. In a world that is focused externally, I understand how difficult this is to do. It is, however, essential. This is the study of yoga.

Namaste,
Joan

Do you have a question for Joan?

Send your questions or mail tojoan@yoyoga.com

Pretty please include the city and state you are from.

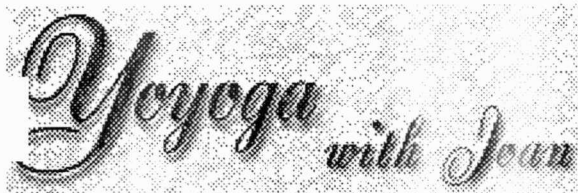
If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

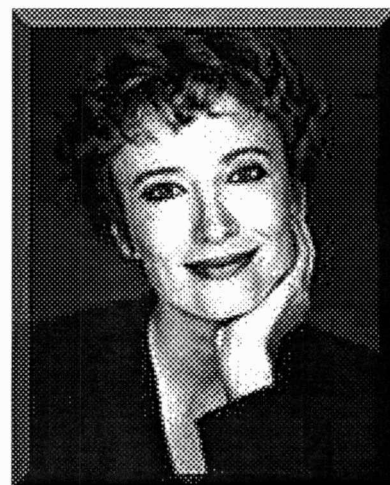
Yo Joan



It's all in the wrist.

Dear Joan,

Can you help with any exercises I can do after the cast comes off my left wrist to strengthen it? I broke it and need a pin put in to heal the bone that broke. The pin will be removed later on. I have good bones but am long and thin so my bones are not big like other people.



From your admirer for the work you do for us women,
Deanna with a broken wing.

Dear Deanna,

Have you had a bone scan by your medical professional? This will give you an idea if osteoporosis is involved at all. If it is, additional amounts of vitamins and minerals and/or hormones can be very helpful. If you are not already taking calcium supplements with vitamin D, you may want to consider it. The broken bone needs to be completely healed before I would recommend yoga poses. A physical therapist would be of great benefit for you at this time. She or he can work with the mobility of your wrist while it is in the cast. There is also a 'temporary cast' that you may be eligible for. A temporary cast is one in which the cast is easily removed when you do the physical therapy exercises. It helps improve circulation and helps the bones heal faster, provided that it is used and removed properly.

While you are in this phase of healing, I would recommend increasing your pranayama work and shavasana studies. Calming the body and permitting excess energy to go toward the healing of the wrist. This is a great time to accept kindnesses from those who offer. Any time is, I suppose, but healing times are times of opportunity for deep, deep strengthening.

Namaste,
Joan

1 + 1 = 2

Dear Joan,

This is a two part question.

First, I have been practicing yoga for about 6 months now. I live in a small town and do not have access to a lot of yoga teachers. I purchased your book and it has helped a lot. I have also purchased several of the yoga journal tapes and try to practice a least 2-3 times a week. I have always been physically fit and work out 4-5 times a week. I can't seem to get a balance between cardiovascular and yoga. When I do more yoga, everything seems to get flabby and I gain more weight. I have already experienced the benefits of yoga and I want to continue. I keep trying different combinations but I need some guidance. Help.

Second, (this is certainly going to effect the answer for the first question) I just found out I am pregnant. About a month. I know I will need to adjust my yoga but when, how, to what degree? This is my second child and I really want to include yoga in this pregnancy because I feel it will be beneficial.

Thanks.

Lee Ann
Columbus, MS

P.S. do you have any books on pregnancy and yoga?

Dear Lee Ann,

The second part of your question does indeed effect the first part. If you were not pregnant, I would suggest considering a practice of "Power Yoga" or "Ashtanga." It is quite an athletic work-out. It has been recently popularized by Madonna, Sting, and oh so many celebrities who are looking for ways to get or stay fit. Since you just found out that you are pregnant (congratulations, dear!), I would not suggest this type of practice for you now. Pregnancy is not a time for heavy athletic work-outs unless you are already conditioned for this long before your pregnancy. I would recommend a practice of yoga for you that is gentle and quieting. It is a time to increase meditation to support the calmness and gentleness of your baby before he or she comes out into this hectic world. Call it coinky-dink, but this very day, I received a book as a gift from Art, a wonderful Swimming Coach at the College of Dupage. This book is called "Yoga For Pregnancy" by Sandra Jordan. Although I have only had a chance to glance through the book so far, it does look great. Art is very insightful, he must have known I was going to get this question from you! I really do not know of other books to recommend on pregnancy and yoga.

Yoga is a beautiful practice to accompany the birth of your baby. Studies were recently done on pregnant mothers who practiced relaxation (shavasana) during their pregnancy and delivery. These studies showed that these women experienced much easier child birth than before, and actually enjoyed the delivery process without the use of any

painkillers.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Dem Bones, Dem Bones...

Dear Joan

What asanas do you think would be helpful for osteoporosis? Are there any that should be avoided? Do you know if there is any research being done in this area?

Thanks for your wonderful website and thoughtful responses.
JGG

Dear JGG,

Osteoporosis is a disease of decreasing bone tissue and loss of bone mass. Bones become less dense and more frail resulting in easier fractures. Various measures can be taken to prevent the severity and/or the occurrence of this disease. The diet is important. Stop drinking coffee which sucks calcium out of the body. With the increase of coffee shops in recent years, we will soon have a new and even bigger baby boom of seniors with multiple bone fractures a few years down the road.

Other influencing factors for developing this condition: heredity, age (over 50), light complexion, and females are more prone. Strength building exercises also help delay or improve this condition. Yoga poses like plank, crow, arm balance, and all standing poses help develop the strength of bones. Stronger bones have a stronger supply of calcium. I would consider increasing your strength building poses and also consider a exercise routine using light weights until your strength improves enough to work with the yoga poses alone. If you take calcium supplements, it is important that you take vitamin D too. Vitamin D helps to absorb the calcium into your system, otherwise, you could get a build up of ineffective calcium that can cause other problems.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Sore Muscles

Hi Joan!

I enjoy your website ever so much, especially the bimonthly asanas.

I have practiced yoga off and on for several years and for the past year have practiced faithfully every day at

the office during lunch with a friend, Lynne, who is new to yoga. Our routine consists of beginning with slow stretches, 2 sets of sun salutation, and then various asanas as time permits with no resting between postures.

Our question, for the both of us, is why after a full year of consistently practicing do we still get sore muscles. Is this normal? I am 58 and Lynne is 56. Is age a factor? Any advise in this regard?

Thank you.
Sue Essary
Houston, Texas

Dear Sue,

Hmmm. After a year of practice, you still get sore muscles? What is your breathing like? Do you take slow deep breathes in the poses? Why not rest between postures? Take a moment to see what effects each particular posture has on you. Perhaps you will find that there is a specific posture that is making you sore. Maybe it is being practiced incorrectly? Also, consider hiring an experienced yoga teacher to watch your practice for at least one session. She or he may be able to pinpoint the source of the sore problem. I do think the breathwork could be a key factor to the soreness. Fibromyalgia is a condition effecting the soreness of muscles. Breathwork can be very effective to help this condition. If the soreness persists though, do check with your physician.

Since you already have been doing this routine for a year, I don't think age is the issue. However, I rarely think age is the issue anyway. Go Girls!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Philosophy

Hi Joan!

My name is Sandra, I am 41, and have recently enrolled in a Hatha yoga class at the local collage. I am very new to this and extremely interested. I have read your info online about yoga philosophy, but i am sure there is more. If you could possibly suggest books videos or online sites, I would appreciate it. I would like more background on when where and how the philosophy began.

Thank You
Sandra Montgomery

Dear Sandra,

Yes, there are many book on the market now regarding the history of yoga philosophy.

My website is meant to wet your appetite. I am happy it has done that. As you may know, I have written a book with Eve Adamson called "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." This book has numerous chapters regarding the history and philosophy of yoga. I would also recommend books by B.K.S Iyengar and Georg Feurstein. Both men have written several excellent books devoted to the history of yoga and its applications. There are many books out there in any major bookstore or public library. Pick up one that appeals to you. Review the background of the author. I would also recommend reading translations of ancient texts that this yoga study stems from. Books like the Bhagavad Gita, The Upanishads, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, etc, etc. Once you start reading, it will interest you to search deeper and deeper. Mahatma Gandhi said once that the essential book in his life was the "Bhagavad Gita". For that reason alone, I think this book would be the first one I would recommend for your reading list.

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.

If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@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.*

10/15/99



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home



The grass IS greener on the other side!

Dear Joan,

Hello there, I have been doing YOGA for 1 year. I am a vegetarian. However, I hear there are some foods that are not very YOGA friendly e.g- garlic onions. Can you help me further with this? Regards,
aira

Dear Joan,

I came across your website while browsing Amazon.com. I am looking for a book on Yoga and Nutrition, but so far have been unable to find anything. I am sure that what you eat must affect your Yoga practice. Do you know of any books on the subject or can you offer any advise?

Thank You
Launi Peeke-Vout



Dear dear Launi and Saira,

I get many letters every week with questions regarding the relationship between yoga and diet. A vegetarian diet is ultimately the diet of choice within the yoga study. Since everyone's body types and metabolisms are different, vegetarian diets also differ. For a more comprehensive understanding of your specific body type and what foods work best for you, I would recommend studying the Indian science of "Ayurveda." This is translated as the "science of life." It is a systematic approach to the body and the appropriate vegetarian foods for its optimal functioning. I am currently studying Ayurveda through the Ayurvedic Institute in New Mexico. For lessons and taped lectures on this subject you can call the Institute at 505-291-9698.

A trained nutritionist who specializes in vegetarianism may also be able to help guide you into the transition from a meat-based diet to a vegetarian one. Many people think that

10/15/99

there is not enough variety in a vegetarian diet. They are very wrong. It is simply a matter of increasing awareness as to the variety of plant based products available. Tofu and Seitan are two examples of delicious protein rich plant products that can be cooked and sauteed in the same way meats can. For those who live on chicken and beef, tofu and seitan are two substitutes that are easy to make, and less expensive too. IF your local supermarket does not carry these products, educate them to start.

But, back to YOGA. The basic approach to the study of yoga stems from ahimsa or non-violence. Non-violence is studied on a physical, verbal and mental level. As one becomes more personally grounded in non-violence, one becomes more acutely aware of the pain and suffering all around us. This includes the suffering of all sentient life, whether this be people, animals, bugs, the environment, etc... As one becomes more aware, one realizes that one is intimately connected to this suffering. This evolves out of the realization of the spirit of "om," or the oneness of life. These understandings stem out of a deeper understanding leading to self-realization

The personal process of self-realization is not an easy process. We do not live in a world that is supportive of this process. For example, in regards to diet, hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecued chicken are connected with joyful festivities. Most of us are not aware that we are intimately connected to the suffering that these foods experienced and contain. In turn, we support and eat this suffering and remove ourselves further from the purification process that is the path of yoga.

When vegetarianism is approached strictly from a physical perspective, it is not deep seated and quite often not long lasting. For example, if one approaches vegetarianism to loose weight or to be physically healthier, although these may be by-products of a vegetarian way of life, this approach is really an egotistical one. Once the ego becomes aware of a few extra pounds, or an unplanned stress/disease, the ego finds justification in returning to a meat based diet. And if that is not enough persuasion, there is a socially acceptable meat-packed fast food restaurant to discourage our fragile will-power on most every block.

And so, when all is said and done, I hope I am able to make the following point clear regarding vegetarianism and the study of yoga...the yoga approach to a vegetarian diet is through self-realization. Vegetarianism does not necessarily give someone a kind heart. There are many mean spirited vegetarians out there. However, a kind heart does ultimately lead to vegetarianism.

Namaste,
Joan

A peaceful creative warrior

Dear Joan,

Hi and firstly, thank you for your wonderful book and this great web site. I have a question concerning a Vinyasa flow that I'm trying to put together (ie slipping it into a Sun Salutation) ---OK, here goes: is it contraindicated or an absolute taboo to do the sequence from Warrior 1, flow into Warrior 3 and then touch down lightly again through 1 before opening the arms and hips to come into Warrior 2I have tried to go from 2 to 3 as in your book (page 132) and find this quite challenging. I mean having already squared my hips and torso to the front in 1, it's easier for me to transfer the weight forward to my front leg and flow

into 3 Am I making any sense to you? Gosh, I hope so.

I live in Florida and look forward to hearing from you soon (and to your asana of the week).

Thanks for your time.
Healthy Blessings and Namaste,
MEG
Florida

Dear Meg,

Yes, Meg! Warrior I to Warrior 3 to Warrior 1 is a GREAT vinyasa. We have multiple variations in the book on ways to put vinyasas together. They are simply ideas to get you started. You have certainly started, Meg, and are now going strong! Beautiful! Excellent!!

**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.

If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.

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

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	To Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest

Best Pumpkin Bread Recipe

Two wonderful recipes have been submitted and are waiting for your vote on your favorite. A wonderful seasonal experience to try! Send your fav vote to joan@yoyoga.com

The recipe with the most votes wins a Pumkinlicious prize direct from Joan!

Let's rise to the occasion...here the Pumpkin Breads are!

Pumpkin Bread

I make this at christmas as gifts. My friends really like it.

Betty Thompson

La PorteTexas

happypaws@ev1.net

1/3 cup shortening
1 cup plus 2 T. sugar
2 eggs
1 cup pumpkin
1 teas. soda in 1/3 cup cold water
1 2/3 cup flour
1/2 teas. cinnamon
/4 teas cloves

1/4 teas. salt
1/4 teas baking powder
1/2 cup chopped nuts
raisans if you want

ream shortening, sugar and add eggs. Add pumpkin, soda and water and mix. Add dry ingredients. Blend well. Stir in nuts and raisins. Bake about 1 hour in a greased loaf pan at 350. (a 1lb. can of pumpkin makes a double recipe)

Pumpkin Bread with Prunes and Walnuts by Dawn Bertuca

You must try this delicious pumpkin bread! I got the recipe from the Winter 1998 issue of Fit Pregnancy magazine. It's very nutritious as well as tasty. Everyone loves it. I double the recipe, which allows you to use the whole can of pumpkin.

Nonstick cooking spray
1 cup canned pumpkin (not pie filling)
2/3 cup evaporated skimmed milk
1 egg
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 wheat germ (or you can use ground-up flax seed)
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon EACH salt, cinnamon and ground cloves
1 cup prunes, snipped into thirds
3 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a 9x5-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a large bowl, whisk together pumpkin, evaporated milk, egg and sugar. set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the flour, wheat germ, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves. Stir into the pumpkin mixture. Add prunes and walnuts, and stir until just combined.

Pour the batter into a prepared loaf pan and bake for approximately 50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the bread comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack for approximately 30 minutes before removing from the pan.

Hope you enjoy! This is delicious with cream cheese, especially if you can find the Pumpkin Pie-flavored kind that you sometimes see in the fall.

Dawn Bertuca

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)



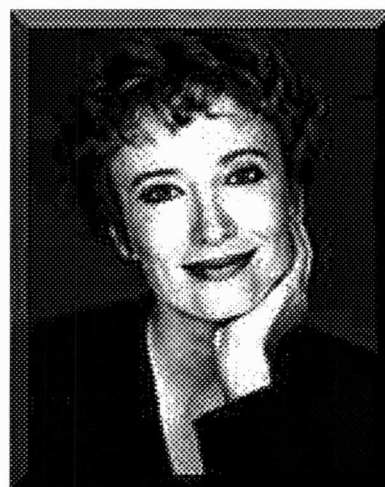
Yo Joan



Yoga for teens

Dear Joan,

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



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

Thank you so much!
Kay
Riverside, IL

Dear Kay,

Much love and shanti to you and your daughter for all your trials this year. I would recommend contacting the Wellness House in Hinsdale Illinois. Their phone number is 30-323-5150. They offer numerous support groups for cancer survivors and for their

families...at no charge. Laura Jane Mellancamp teaches a yoga class there once a month that you all may be interested in attending. It is gentle yoga. I would recommend this for your daughter. Even though she may be very athletic, this will give her the necessary ingredients to de-stress while also providing opportunities to become stronger and more flexible. We sometimes think they we need intense workouts to de-stress. This is not true. Intensity can often simply cause the body to become exhausted. There is a significant difference between exhaustion and relaxation. Exhaustion actually puts more stress on the body by wearing it down.

There is also a wonderful teacher in your area called Kathleen Wright. I have never met her, but have heard wonderful things. Her studio is called "Garden of Yoga." She has Iyengar training. This is a type of yoga training that highly focuses on alignment and the use of props, such as blocks and bolsters, to aid the body in opening. Her yoga studio number is 708-802-1329. You may want to also pick up a copy of the Yoga Chicago newspaper or check out their website at www.yogachicago.com for even more local listings of yoga teachers and classes. Since you live locally, please feel free to call me to discuss other options for your daughter as well. My Yoyoga number is 630-963-1906.

I have total hope and faith in the healing process...

Namaste,
Joan

Yo Sport!

Dear Joan,

Hello my name is Georgia and i live up in the Catskill Mountains in NY. I am very interested in yoga and I'm actually writing a report on how yoga can help you with sports when using your mind and body. I'm also fascinated with Hinduism and I'm thinking of becoming Hindu. So if you would have any tips on how yoga helps with sports or any tricks or methods in yoga that I could explain in the article please send them to me. Thank you and I can't wait to hear you thoughts and tips for this article.

Sincerely yours,
Georgia Millar

Dear Georgia,

Please refer to Chapter Two in 'CIG to Yoga' where Eve and I go into more detail about specific sports and yoga. Yoga is the ultimate work-out for the body and mind, but it is not a sport. It is not competitive in any way. Yoga uses your own body weight to build strength. For some of us, lifting our own body weight involves quite a lot of huffing and puffing! Yoga works to subtly lift the weight through inversions that increase strength. The strength building is balanced with flexibility training. A healthy body is BOTH strong and flexible. Regarding your interest in becoming a Hindu, I am not a Hindu, but yoga does have its roots in India, and so many of the historical texts that yoga uses are also used in Hinduism.

All the best, Georgia, on your upcoming report. If you have the time to send me a copy of it, I would love to read it too.

**I amaste,
Joan**

Prenatal Video

Dear Joan,

I highly recommend this prenatal yoga video: Prenatal Yoga with Colette Crawford, from Holistic Life Productions, 1-888-547-4493. It's a very challenging yet gentle workout designed by an RN and yoga instructor. I did it until my 8th month of pregnancy and I had a 10-hour labor, very easy with no epidural.

Dawn Bertuca

Dear Dawn,

Thanks for the great tip, Dawn. I hope others will heed your good words so we'll have many more happy mamas delivering bundles of joy out there.

**I amaste,
Joan**

Snap, Crackle, POP! It's yoga class!!!

Dear Joan,

I lapse into periods where I don't practice yoga. The problem is, that when I get back into it, after say a month off, and I slowly start stretching my spine, the old familiar clicks and cracks come back. One of these clicking vertebrae - which is the cause of this letter - is situated between the lower half of my shoulder-blades. I find the more I supple up my spine again, the more pain and discomfort I experience there - especially after practicing halasana. The discomfort and pain is due to having the feeling of needing the 'click' the spine there, which I can do by clasping my hands behind my back with outstretched arms (in the periods when I'm not doing yoga, it doesn't bother me). It is quite tiring and I feel the muscles around my abdomen, chest and in my back, straining to keep comfort (especially during walking or sitting - I always sit on the floor). Please suggest something, as the benefits of practicing yoga are immediately felt in many other aspects.

The other thing is, that while stretching upwards with my arms and opening my chest (the first part of Salutation for example) my whole diaphragm makes an awful cracking sound, but I feel relieved afterwards. I have a 'clicking' skeleton. Does eating raw, good oils help with this?

Thanks... Paula

Dear Paula,

Regarding the clicking between the shoulders, you mention pain happens in halasana. First point - STOP doing halasana. This pose is not for everyone. It can actually do more harm than good if the spine is not ready or willing. The clicking in itself does not trouble me, for I too click, downward dog does it for me, particularly if I have not practiced it for awhile. I have noticed that for me it is simply a matter of 'greasing the joints.' The more I practice, the less I click. Are you studying with a teacher? I would highly recommend this so that the teacher can see exactly what you are doing. Although I do my best to visualize through a computer, a face to face teacher is best.

But your situation does sound more intense. Have you considered checking with a chiropractor regarding your spine? He or she might be able to give you an adjustment that will solve or help to heal your problem. You mention the feeling of needing the click. Is this an actual need or is it a habit? Paula, my main concern is all the discomfort you feel. A chiropractor or naprapath may simply give you a proper adjustment and then everything will finally 'click' into place! Why be in discomfort when there are options out there to help us in our healing journey? Also, I highly recommend regular massages. For those of us with sluggish systems, a regular massage helps the circulatory effects of the body. And on top of that, it feels fantastic! Continue your yoga studies under the guidance of a qualified teacher who can help you determine the poses most beneficial to your specific body and spine.

amaste,
Joan

Anxiety

Dear Joan,

I have recently finished reading your book and have to say feel somewhat inspired to incorporate Yoga into my lifestyle. However, for the past year I have had great problems with stress and anxiety and I am wondering if yoga could help me put all of this behind me.

Secondly, I have been studying the various Asanas but I am unsure how to link them together into a session. Could you please advise me on this?

Greetings from Scotland,
Sarah MacAndrew

Dear Sarah,

First of all, Sarah, I would advise you to approach the asanas simply one at a time. In

between each asana, rest in shavasana. This is a way for you to see the effects of each asana on your body and mind, and to become more acquainted with each one before considering vinyasa (flowing from one asana to another). In the back of the book you have, Eve and I list various suggestions on the order of asanas. You are encouraged to experiment with your own order too.

Regarding stress reduction, this is exactly what yoga can help you with. This is also why I suggest for you to incorporate shavasana between each posture. There is no rush to achieve in yoga. It is non-competitive. When you practice at home, close your eyes and soften the lights. Internalize. Play soft quieting music to help you quiet the mind. Shavasana is the key to your studies. Read chapter 19 again. We devoted a full chapter to shavasana (in our 'CIG to Meditation book' too) because of this asana's great significance to the study of yoga, and in particular, to stress reduction. Shavasana is something we can all benefit from in our stress filled world.

Namaste,
Joan

Opening up...

Dear Joan,

I've ravaged my 47 year old body with illegal narcotics once again after a 22 year period of being absolutely drug-free. This "stint" lasted one year. I recently (2 weeks ago) went through a medical detoxification and am currently drug-free (except for tobacco and a sleeping agent). During this past 2 weeks my mind and body have been on a roller-coaster. Panic attacks, anxiety and even darker thoughts.

My son's daughter brought me your Idiot's Guide to Yoga. Although I haven't complete mental concentration yet, the breathing exercises are unquestionably helpful, dare I say, necessary to calm me down. My sister has been taking a class and has extolled the virtues as well. I hope to become more involved in the philosophy and physical aspects of yoga, using your book as a springboard. Please be aware that your energy through words have a positive impact on people. It's not just that you wrote a book. You have allowed a drug-addict to open his eyes, to see the connection between mind and body. To begin to take steps, however small on the road to a healthier mind and body. Please be cognizant of this, so that you may continue to have the power to help others and not tire out. There is surely someone else out there who could be affected the way I was/am.

Most Sincerely,
Michael

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your heart-felt, honest letter and your kind words of inspiration. It is sometimes great suffering that brings us to paths like yoga. I am glad you found this path, and I encourage you to continue on it. Your suffering has not been in vain. You are here to help many people see there is true hope and resiliency in life. Continue on in bhakti....

11/1/99

Namaste,
Joan

A Path to Peace.

Dear Joan,

Hope you had a pleasant, relaxing yet stimulating summer (sounds like a contradiction, but it's not!).

Just a few comments to your recent "Yo Joan" column note regarding vegetarianism. It appears as if yoga is a process that eventually becomes away of life without one even consciously realizing what is happening. The body inherently knows what's good for it and the desire for eating meat decreases with yoga practice. At least personally, I feel less aggressive, less tense, and lighter in mind and body if I say "no" to a steak dinner and a cup of coffee afterwards. I don't consider myself a vegetarian (yet) and do go off track a bit, but enjoy it less and less. Then of course there are now some great vegetarian cookbooks out there.

If yoga is a "process" as it appears to be, what other changes should a "yoga novice" as myself expect to experience in the future?

With kind regards,
Namaste,
Ed

Dear Ed,

Tough question. As each of us comes here with different karmic patterns, the changes in me may be quite different than the changes in you. In general terms, destructive patterns will become clearer and less tempting to follow. Self-awareness increases, judgementalness lessens.

This reminds me of the true story of a monk who spent decades in prison. Almost every day he was beaten and tortured. Still, after so many years of continual abuse, he did not harbor hatred towards his captors and abusers. How do you think he could do that?

In relationship to your question, we are all in the prisons of our karma. We need to first become more aware of our karma. By this I mean, what are the knee-jerk reactions to events in one's life?. What situations appear regularly in your life? Altho faces and places may change, what situations or experiences keep reappearing? When situations become more stressful, how do you respond? For example, to demonstrate different karmic patterns: If someone tells someone else to go jump in the lake, responses that naturally arise may differ from person to person. One person might respond with a punch in the mouth, someone else might laugh, someone else might get out a swimsuit, someone else might throw a swimming party! We need to first uncover what our specific reactive patterns are.

Next, we need to learn how to constructively change our destructive patterns, thinking, and being, so that our love is not conditional to external forces. This is very difficult. Iatha yoga can be very difficult. How patient are you with your body? How hard do you

11/1/99

work? What are your reactions when a pose gets challenging? How do you view others?
Dear Ed, I hope you find these questions and comments helpful in this process of yoga
(unity).

Namaste,
Joan

Yogameister?

Dear Joan,

This is not a question of technique, flexibility, or trying to find a yoga school near me. My questions to you are: How has yoga helped you in your everyday life? What was your life before yoga? What drew you to yoga in the first place? Has yoga made you happier? What tangible results have you seen in your life through practicing? Though yoga practices non-violence, haven't you just wanted to BOP! some people? Inquiring minds want to know!!!

shasta
Mr. Sardonicus

Dear Mr. Sardonicus,

Thank you, sir, for the opportunity to put into writing some of my personal experiences
in soul-searching..

Yoga has helped me more than I could ever put into words. When I was first introduced to the postures in a college class in 1976, I knew that it calmed me significantly. I would go off to work feeling blessed and lighter in spirit. Others noticed too and brought this to my attention. I was a teenager then, and struggling with so many contradictions in life. Yoga seemed to bring my inner chaotic life into some balance. I did not understand the depth of the study then. This was not presented in class. The attitude and postures alone calmed me. A year later, I was introduced to the philosophical aspects through the Self-Realization Fellowship. I can not describe the utter sense of peace I felt through the seminars and lectures I attended there. It made sense to me. I was not, and am not, a religious person. Yoga gave me an outlet to my spirituality that I had not experienced before. It was truly a body and mind experience. I continued on my own path, reading everything I could about yoga.

Yoga has made me happier. It is strange tho, to say a one word term "yoga" can make me happier, because yoga encompasses so much. Much more than one simple word could state. But then again, part of the study involves meditation....centering on the divine - one word, one image, one sound can indeed say everything.

What tangible results have I seen? Other than the obvious of being stronger and more flexible than I would be if I did not practice hatha, I feel a sense of peace that is deep. Granted, it does not always present itself outwardly. Yes, I do feel like bopping someone sometimes, and I do get angry. I do say inappropriate things way too often. Yet, I do have moments of peace and oneness with the world that have become longer

over the years. I have experienced these moments as profound. This is a sense of what yoga has inspired within me. I plan to continue my studies. I plan to continue growing.

Thanks again, pal.

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.

If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan

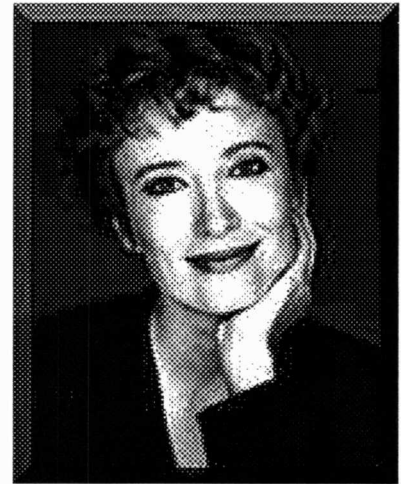


Queen for a Day!

Dear Joan,

Could you give me some advice on the asanas that will give a sluggish thyroid a bit of a kick start.

Regards,
Yolanda



Dear Yolanda,

Shoulderstand, plow, yoga poses that bring the legs up and slightly back to compress or expand the neck. This brings increased circulation to the thyroid area. A consistent practice of these poses can be of great benefit to the thyroid. I have noticed that women tend to have more problems with thyroid than men. Could this be why shoulderstand is sometimes referred to as the "Queen posture" and Headstand the "King posture?"

Namaste,
Joan

Yo Kripalu!

Dear Joan,

In your opinion, is the Kripalu center a suitable place for a beginner as myself to take a few classes ? A penny for your thoughts.

Sincerely,
Jay Polatnick

Dear Jay,

Save your money, Jay, because my thoughts are free! Absolutely, the Kripalu center is an exceptionally wonderful place for a beginner or for someone at advanced levels of study. They have extensive programs in hatha, meditation and an assortment of body mind therapies. I highly recommend them. I spent some time in their retreat center in Mass. A couple of years ago. It was a beautiful, peaceful and progressive environment. I highly recommend taking a yoga retreat there.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Round body yoga

Dear Joan,

I have been researching your book (The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga) and am very interested in what I am reading. I would love to start doing this, but I am 300 pounds! How can I get my very round body into those very long poses? Is there any kind of variations that will help? I am 25 years old, and I live in Norman, Oklahoma.

Thanks
Christy

P.S. I was wondering where I could find a yoga instructor. I have looked in the phone book, but funnily enough, there aren't any there. They offered a class at my gym, but they were full by the time I got there to sign up, and they're not repeating or opening another one. Any suggestions?

Dear Christy,

The very fact that you want to do yoga, will enable you to. There are various alterations that can be applied to all the poses to fit different body types. Let me give you one example for you: poses that require you to position yourself on your hands and knees may be uncomfortable to your wrists do to your weight. Make your hands into fists and rest on your knuckles to take some of the pressure off of the wrists.

There is a video out from "Plus Productions" called "Yoga For Round Bodies. You may

want to check it out by ordering from a library or calling the publisher at (800) 793-0666. I have not seen the videos, but I read an article about it in a Sept. '94 edition of Yoga Journal and it impressed me. Regarding classes, pick up a copy of these national magazines, "Yoga International" (my preference) and "Yoga Journal." Both magazines publish ads for yoga centers and retreats across the country. You may very well be able to find a yoga retreat center quite close to you! Also, check out health food store bulletin boards, YMCAs, and park districts for more local possibilities. Happy, peaceful, non-violent hunting!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Community Education

Dear Joan,

My name is Erica Knoblock. I am enrolled in a Beginners Yoga class offered through the Community Education program in my community. Your book The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga is on the suggested reading list my instructor gave us. I am thoroughly enjoying the book. I especially like that it does not just give poses and pictures, but goes into depth about the Yoga Philosophy. I like knowing where ideas originate. It gives me a better understanding of the culture that developed them. I look forward to many years of learning.

Thanks again for a wonderful book,
Erica
Gainesville, Florida
p.s. My favorite pose is the Tree Pose.

Dear Erica,

Thank YOU, Erica. The book was a joy to put together, and I really like Tree Pose too!

**Namaste,
Joan**

And give my regards to your wonderful teacher.

Continuing on...

Dear Joan,

I've never written a fan letter before, but I'm writing one now. Thank you for writing books that were non-competitive, non-judgemental, and just plain kind to the reader. Most books on health are so rigid and deal in guilt. Thank you for not doing that!

I deeply appreciate the work that goes into your web site and I refer to it often, as well. Thanks for having a site that is actually updated and responds to the reader.

I also wish to send my deepest condolences on the loss of your brother. Dealing with grief is so very hard and I wanted to send you warm wishes and support.

Thank you so very much for your work.
Linda Smith
Hillsboro, OR

Dear Linda,

My brother's death has been difficult for me and my family. Thank you for your kind words of support. By sharing my sorrow, hearts, including your beautiful heart Linda, have opened up to me. I realize I am not alone in the difficult struggles the grief process brings. Let us continue to share, help, and support each other...

**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.**

**If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.**

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

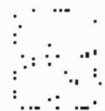
Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@yoyoga.com



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan

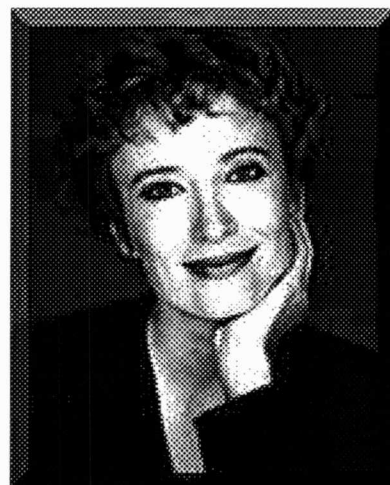


boo who?

Dear Joan,

All high yogi master, I'm afraid of yoga...aren't there ghosts involved?

Mr. Sardonicus
Rockford, Illinois



Dear Mr. Sardonicus,

There most certainly are ghosts. Ghosts of our own making. They flutter back and forth across the mind. Yoga is the process of quieting these ghosts, this constant mind chatter. It is nothing to be afraid of.. Then again, Mr Sardonicus, your fluttering ghosts may be quite different than mine....

Namaste,
Joan

Tofu-Turkey

Dear Joan,

How do you stuff a tofu-turkey?

A Friend

Dear friend,

Not considering myself much of a cook...I would recommend the fabulous "Vegetarian Times" national magazine available in any major bookstore for terrific ideas for you. There are many vegetarian alternatives to turkey...tofu being one of them. There may also be a vegetarian society to become socially involved with in your area. In Chicago, we have "The Chicago Vegetarian Society." On the internet at: <http://www.chicagovegetariansoc.org/> This organization sponsors social events to encourage friendships and offer educational support in being a vegetarian - a choice that is difficult in our society.

Would it not be an incredible thanksgiving if we expanded our thanks to our distant relatives in the animal kingdom? We still have a long way to go with human rights in our world, so hard to believe, perhaps, that we could be politically/emotionally/compassionately aware enough to realize that animals suffer in the ways that we do. Difficult to believe, perhaps, that we could realize in our physical actions, what we already know in our deepest self. This realization being that the actions we take (whether direct or indirect) to cause pain and suffering in the animal kingdom, is our very own pain. Om.

Again, for recipe meal suggestions, I would recommend "Vegetarian Times" magazine, along with a sincere blessing for the life that was given to sustain another. Thank you for your question, my dear friend. Truly, my dear friend.

Amaste,
Joan

Kind support

Dear Joan,

I have just finished reading the latest issue at Yoyoga.com and was deeply saddened to learn from another of your readers that you have lost your brother. I always find at times like this that people don't really know what to say. I am not a deeply religious person however I read this the other day which made me smile. It is from the book 'Love is letting Go of Fear' by Gerald Jampolsky and it says,

A man who had finished his life went before God. And God reviewed his life and showed him the many lessons he had learned. When he had finished, God said, "My child, is there anything you wish to ask?" And the man said, "While You were showing me my life, I noticed that when the times were pleasant there were two sets of footprints, and I knew You walked beside me. But when times were difficult there was only one set of footprints. Why, Father, did you desert me during the difficult times?" And God said, "You misinterpret my son. It is true that when times were pleasant I walked beside you and pointed out the way. But when times were difficult, I carried you." (P10)

I find it very comforting to think that even when we may feel at our lowest ebb, there is always someone who is thinking of you. And the someone's in your case Joan must amount to a large number!

All my love
Sarah MacAndrew.
Edinburgh University, Scotland

Dear Sarah,

Thank you, Sarah, for your beautiful letter of support and kindness. The story you shared is a deeply moving and magnificent one too. I know there are many yoyoga readers out there who have a difficult time over the holidays because of the death or illness of loved ones. Your letter reminds us that we all share a common bond of life in its many forms, and one of these forms is death. The closer we come to death, the more we appreciate life.

Continuing in the yogic way, the more we appreciate life, the more we appreciate death. By this I mean, that the two are intimately connected. When our loved ones die, we not only grieve their death, but grieve our own. It is a time of inner reflection. It is a time of pain. It is a time of healing. It is a time of re-birth. And as you so eloquently say and portray, Sarah, it is a time for "all my love." Thank you.

**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.

If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.

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

**[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)**

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana

Philosophy

Yoga Tips

Yo Joan

Recipe

Bookstore

About Joan

Home

Yo Joan

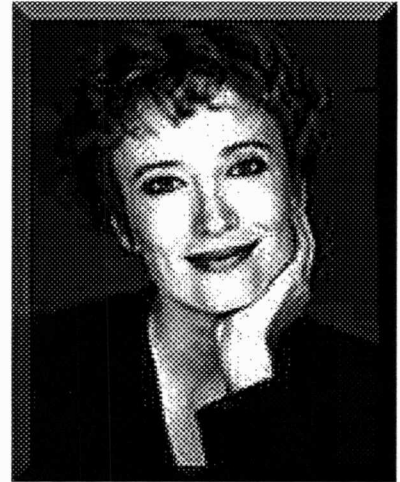


Hola!

Dear Joan,

We buy your book masage in spanish and looks very interesting, we want to say !hola! and we will like to comuniccate with you.

Rosalinda T. de Fernandez
Calexico, Ca.



Dear Rosalinda,

Espanol? Que? Diga me, donde esta el book? Muchas gracious para la informacia, mi amiga. Estan comunicado!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yoga suit from outer space

Dear Joan,

Would like to purchase yoga suit long sleeves a snap crotch. I am 190 pounds desperate.

Thank you
Tom B.
Avon, Ohio

Dear Tom,

Funny what desperation can lead to. I can't help ya, pal.

**Namaste,
Joan**

The spirit of Christmas

Dear Joan,

Sometime perhaps we can talk about how Eastern mysticism and thought can live in harmony with Christianity. I suppose that I am thinking of the admonitions of my Southern Christian upbringing that didn't allow for multiple paths to God. Please don't be offended by my questions about yoga thought, I have some of the same questions about Native American spirituality as well.

I need to reconcile the approach with my own understanding of my Christian faith's tenets. Regardless of the direction I go, it will be a fun journey and I will be wiser for it.

Namaste, love and shanti (am I redundant?),
Kim

Dear Kim,

Your questions and concerns about your Christian beliefs are valid and shared by many.

Yoga is based in India and sometimes confused with Hinduism. Yoga is not a religion, although the distinctions are sometimes confusing. Yoga, in its true essence, can support and encourage whatever religious faith you have. Svadhyaya is a sanskrit term in yoga that means self-study. This means quiet introspection within the yoga poses, and within the study of sacred texts. This involves studying the nectar of sacred literature and exploring the deep meanings inherent within these writings. The reading of sacred literature is highly encouraged because it lifts the thought processes.

As you are a Christian, applying and discovering the yogic principles of non-violence, contentment, truthfulness, etc. to your studies of the Bible can serve to deepen your understanding and appreciation of this rich text. Studying sacred texts from the Hindu perspective, such as the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads, can also serve to deepen your appreciation of the spiritual essence and truth that is inherent in all great sacred literature. Studying different texts of different religious faiths, in the yogic sense, is not meant to persuade one to change religions, but rather to deepen one's respect for divinity in all of its many forms. "Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock,

and it will be opened to you." - Luke 11:9

Concentration is another important aspect of yoga. For you, this may involve continuing your deep exploration of the Bible without exploring other religious texts. All great sacred texts have so many rich dimensions within them, that surely a lifetime can be spent in bringing the foundation of one's particular religious faith into one's life. To truly breathe in and out the principles of sacredness - to live in full realization of self respect, respect towards others, love, peace, and harmony. Yoga means uniting body and mind. And, in this process, comes the full realization of the intimate bond of life we share with each other.

Namaste and shanti are sanskrit words. Namaste means recognizing and respecting the divinity within all. Shanti means peace. So, you are not redundant when you say, "Namaste, love and shanti". You are all encompassing.

Namaste, love, shanti,
and Merry Christmas,
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.

If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in letter.
Joan respectfully gives each letter received her individual and kind attention.

[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [Yo Joan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#)

Yoyoga, Inc.

E-Mail us at: joan@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.