

Yo Joan



Bone up!

Dear Joan,

I love yoga. I practice yoga at night with your "Yoga with Joan" audio tape, and I do some sun salutations in the morning. I just found out today that I have osteoporosis in my lower back and early stages of it in my hips. My doctor is prescribing medicine. Does this mean I have to stop yoga?



Wakefield

Dear Ann,

I would follow your doctors orders. However, you should understand that yoga helps to build bone density. Many of the yoga poses are weight baring. It is an excellent program for seniors who are loosing bone mass through aging. Since you have already been diagnosed with osteoporosis, you must be specially cautious of lifting too much weight in order to prevent bone breakage. Your own body weight (which is what yoga poses work with), may be too much for you to handle now. Take yoga classes with knowledgeable yoga instructors who can give you the personal attention you need. When we are in large classes, the teacher can not always attend to the special needs of the students. If you choose to go to larger classes, tell the teacher of your concerns, but still go very slowly into the movements.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Fat Kat?

Joan,

I am a fat girl who has been interested in yoga for some time now. (For the record, my doctor has confirmed that I am in good health, I don't eat crap, and I am trying to quit smoking.) I have ordered some books, but I wondered if you knew of any classes that address yoga for larger persons in particular or if you had any comments on what special problems a larger person might encounter when beginning yoga.

Thank you,
Kat

Dear Kat,

Thank you, Kat, for bringing me this question to start off the new year. So many people make a new year resolution to loose that extra 10, 20, or 30+ pounds. The health clubs are filled to the brim with attendees these first few weeks of the new year. People anxious and desperate to change their physical forms. This large attendance quickly levels off within a few weeks, or sometimes months, when old habits reappear and/or disillusioned minds resume their well worn place of authority. I encourage you to keep writing back to me over the next few months to help you through these difficult times and struggles.

The first step to weight loss is to be happy exactly where you are now. That means to be happy with exactly the weight you are now. It may seem incredulous to you, but this is the only way to a life that is truly healthy. Instead of directing you toward a quick weight loss program, I would encourage you to read books that address and cause you to question and explore your emotional and spiritual sides. Yoga means "union." The study of yoga is a study of uniting the emotional/spiritual/physical self into a balanced state of existence. You are fully conscious, Kat, of the uneven weight distribution - this means you are unbalanced on the physical side of your being. In order to find balance, you need to bring more focus into the other sides of your being. More energy needs to be directed to the emotional and spiritual sides to bring the physical side into balance.

Certainly, if you are dangerously overweight, a physician may be able to help you in a more immediate weight loss program. However, recognize that these types of programs rarely effectively address the deeper imbalances that exist. It is the karmic pattern that needs to be broken. Karma involves the lessons we have to work through in this lifetime. If we can work through, solve, and/or come to peace with the problems we are faced with this lifetime, we will not have this karma (lesson) to take to the next lifetime. In the next lifetime the lesson will be even more complicated and submerged. Like a snowball down the mountain that develops into an avalanche. Whether or not you believe in multiple lifetimes, working through the karma of this lifetime will make this very lifetime less troubled and more satisfying.

So, now, where to we begin with your dilemma. First of all, watch your self talk. Do not denigrate yourself though the way you verbally refer to yourself. This verbal talk may be within your own mind, or shared outwardly with others. Even if others use debasing talk towards you, watch the ways you respond and rise to a higher level of contemplation. Wake up in the morning, look into the mirror, into your own eyes and say, "You are beautiful. I am beautiful." Say this slowly and with depth of feeling. You may not believe these words at first, but in time you will. The key is to be consistent. Say this upon rising every single morning. You may also want to say this upon going to sleep at night. This will encourage a restful and peaceful sleep.

There are numerous books on the market that address eating behaviors. In fact, diet and cook books are the

two best selling books on the market! I would suggest to avoid these types of books right now. I would instead recommend Susie Orbach's best selling book of the 70's called "Fat is a Feminist Issue." I would also recommend, "Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda (who, by the way, was quite a large man). Organizations like "Overeaters Anonymous" also help to inspire people to look past the physical for deeper levels of fitness. Whether or not you are overweight, this free organization that is listed in phone books, can encourage you to have a deeper understanding and respect for all sizes and shapes of people.

Importantly, it will help you to have a deeper understanding and respect for your own size and shape.

Through studies and reflections from the above books recommended and possible involvement with an organization like OA, you will be on the road to a deeper respect and understanding for the beauty in where you are right now. This very minute. Whatever physical size, shape, or health you are in, your body is the temple of your soul. A soul that is magnificent, beautiful, and in perfect health.

**Namaste,
Joan**

The Second Edition of the Millennium!

Dear Joan,

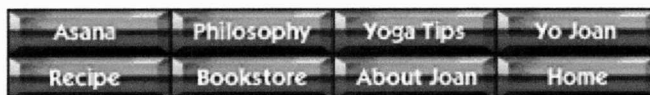
I just received my copy of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, 2nd Edition" at the beginning of the month. I've been gobbling it up so happily that I finally emerged to write you. The book is great! Thank you so much for your work, especially during this busy year for you. What you put into your web page and your books is completely appreciated, at least by me! :)

Thanks, and have a great New Year,
Linda Smith
Hillsboro, Oregon

Dear Linda,

It warms my heart to read your letter. What a wonderful way for us to begin on this 2001 Earth Odyssey together! Thank you!! Onward Voyagers!!!

**Namaste,
Joan**



Yo Joan



Slow?

Dear Joan,

I have been practicing meditation for a long time. It seems for ever. This is my passion and I spent every single minute to meditate. I started with a few minutes at the beginning and now I meditate for about four hours a day. It is not a time that makes me happy but progress. It is slow or maybe I am not passion enough.

goal is to achieve enlighten with Gad "...to be myself, to feel myself, to become my higher self, to be reunited
 i God and his creations " (Edgar Cayce)I have red many book about this subject it is not enough place to name them all (...astral projection, lucid dreams, near death experiences, out-of-body experiences and so on...) It has been said that practice makes progress. My question is: is this process that slow ?The main problem in my situation is thinking. Mind like to chad, send images ...Could you give me a bit of advices ?

Your last name Budilovsky sounds polish. The correct spelling would be Budilovsky. I know something about it, I was born in Poland. My name is Chris Bednarkiewicz. Thank you for help.

Dear Chris,

Since you like to read, check out the book, "Path of Fire and Light" by Swami Rama. He, too, devoted his life to meditation and hatha. Since you are so blessed to have the time to spend in developing your practice, you may want to consider living at an ashram for a while? I just came back from the Sivananda Yoga Ashram in the Bahamas. I would love to have been able to live there longer than the brief 2 weeks my schedule permitted. You will find like minded souls at a yoga ashram that are as dedicated and available to their yoga and meditation practice as you are. Four hours a day seems like a mighty long time for a seated meditation practice, but then again, many yogis and yoginis have dedicated their lives in



this pursuit...you may very well be one of them. I want to sincerely encourage you on your path of deeper understandings.

naste,

p.s. I am Polish, from my mother's side. Her maiden name was "Turlo." My father, John Budilovsky is Czech. So I am 1/2 Polish and 1/2 Czech.

A Fat Kat with nine lives?

Dear Joan,

I am so surprised with the response you gave to Kat, who asked for information on yoga classes for larger people. If I read her questions correctly, she was looking for class information and special problems a large person might encounter when beginning yoga. She did not ask for a lecture on her weight and for information on eating behaviors. She said she was healthy, yet you discussed what she could do if she is "dangerously overweight." Kat appeared to be comfortable with her weight, yet she was instructed on how to approach her "dilemma."

I weigh over 200 pounds (5'8") and have taken yoga for 4 years. Granted, I cannot move into some of the postures like a person of smaller stature, but I certainly get a lot of benefit from yoga. I always keep in mind that yoga is not a competition. Two years ago, my instructor approached me about teaching classes. Yes, all 200+ pounds of me. I started teaching 1 night a week, and increased it to 2 nights. I believe that I was able to help many people while teaching. Imagine my pleasure when a student told me she was able to stop taking her arthritis medication because of participating in my classes. I have found many people intimidated when starting a yoga practice, and can sometimes relate better to someone who is physically similar. I enjoyed teaching so much that I am now pursuing my teacher certification. I am hoping to eventually gear my teaching to individuals of larger stature or mobility impaired. Yoga is for ANYONE, Joan, and one should not have to feel the need to lose weight before starting classes. I guess your attitude is one of the "special problems" Kat fears she might encounter.

I am more than happy to discuss this with you further.

Laura
Countryside, IL

Dear Laura,

Gee, Laura. I am only human...then again, I am magnificently human! Yes, Laura, I agree that yoga is for ANYONE. I teach yoga as a holistic approach to health and as a complete lifestyle for all shapes, sizes, ages, and health conditions. I am sorry I offended you by my response to Kat's letter. I probably very well did read more into her letter than what her questions to me were. I get many letters regarding yoga as a weight loss program and perhaps I get carried away sometimes in my response that yoga is a

lifestyle approach and not a weight loss program. Altho many people do end up loosing weight, some gain, and most all come to a comfortable weight through a steady practice of yoga. Yoga is for all shapes and sizes. Read on from other readers for more yoga suggestions for larger bodied people (by the way, I am hardly a physical pip squeak myself:). I encourage you on your path of teaching, Laura. I am also ever a student and learn much from the many letters I receive. Thank you for sharing your concerns and may we continue together in peace and an ever increasing sensitivity to others, and to ourselves, along this path of consciousness raising....

**Namaste,
Joan**

Only nine lives?

Dear Joan,

I love your response to Kat who mentions that she wants to practice yoga but doesn't have a trim body. Many years ago in yoga class, the teacher, who was a heavy-set woman, gave me and another beginning student a private demonstration of the sun salutation. As we watched quietly, she flowed through the poses with little effort and it was so beautiful. Her body was so flexible and could flow so smoothly from one pose into the next. We students were so moved that we found ourselves in tears - which surprised me very much. To this day, that memory is an inspiration to me. She was at home in her body. Someday I hope to have such grace and beauty when I do my asanas.

Thank you as always for "yoyoga." It is an oasis of peace that I love to visit.

Lori Erickson

Dear Lori,

Teachers can be inspirations in many ways, as well as students can be...om. shanti, shanti, shanti....peace, peace, peace.-----

**Namaste,
Joan**

forall Bodies Videos

Dear Joan,

I'm writing in response to Kat who was struggling with her weight. I thought Kat might like to know about a few poses mentioned in an article "Why yoga works when diet often fails" (Nov./Dec issue of Yoga Journal).....they include, "Yoga for Round Bodies" by Genia Pauli Haddon; "Gentle Yoga with Naomi" by Naomi Judith Offner; and "The Gentle Way" by Lanita Varshell.

Thanks so much Joan for your wonderful books & web site, and for your beautiful spirit.

Namaste,
Jane
Chicago, IL

Dear Jane,

I often refer students and readers to Genia Pauli's featured article in Yoga Journal called "Yoga for Round Bodies." Inspiring and beautifully written...it has encouraged many full spirited yogis...myself included. Thank you for the suggestions!

Namaste,
J

Barf Bag Yoga?

Dear Joan,

I really enjoyed your complete idiots guide to yoga which I bought a few months ago and that has inspired me to write all the way from New Zealand. I have been doing yoga practice at home from tapes and from the poses in your books. But I have been finding that in the last few months that even half an hours practice is making me nauseous and after an hour I'll throw up. I went to the doctors and they can't see any problems but gave me some antibiotics just to be sure. I'm hoping you can help, because I love yoga and want to get seriously into it if possible but this is something of a hiccup for this ambition.

yours
Lianne Moore
New Zealand

Dear Lianne,

Maybe you can write back to me and tell me more about what your hatha yoga practice consists of. What is your diet like? Is there a yoga teacher in your area that you can study with too? You may need more than books and tapes right now - the welcoming and personal touch of a teacher who can help you find balance in your studies.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Weighty issues

Dear Joan,

I am starting my first Yoga class next Thursday. Last year I lost a lot of weight for my wedding, and I have noticed that I am starting to gain some back. Will yoga help to loose weight or maintain. Should I accompany my yoga class with another form of exercise to increase weight lose?

Thanks in advance for any help you can offer.

Carey

Dear Carey,

AAAAHHHH! Another weighty question! Yoga will help you to uncover where the weight issues stem from. Yoga will help you to be more conscious of an unhealthy diet and help you towards a path of healthy eating. I would recommend another form of exercise, rather than the yoga asanas, for weight loss. I recommend the asanas for balance. Yoga is a total lifestyle that will help you learn to feel comfortable with every step and pound along the way. Through this process of acceptance one's perfect weight is realized. It may not be the same weight that appears in fashion magazines or from long gone school days...but through a yoga lifestyle of proper diet, exercise, breath, and relaxation, you will come to the weight that is the healthiest weight for you. A weight that you will feel comfortable with and will permit you to shine in your magnificence! This has been quite a weighty issue. This big/little yogini is ready for some carob cookies...

Namaste,

Joan

Massage Mania

Dear Joan,

I'd like to tell you a true story, which ultimately has had a happy ending.

Two years ago I was invited to a New Years Eve party with a man I had been involved with quite some time. The party was thrown by some friends and one of the men there was a chiropractor/LMT. As his "gift" to us he was going to give us all (there were 4 other people there) adjustments and massages. I had never had a massage before.

When it came my turn I went into the room and had no idea what to expect. He told me to completely undress and cover myself with the sheet. I told him at that time I did not feel comfortable taking my panties off. He told me he could not give me a good massage with them on. I again said I didn't feel comfortable with that. He said to trust him, he was a professional and it was just like being at the doctor. Since he was a friend of my dates and a "professional" I decided I was probably just being silly. (Bad move, always trust your guts.) He gave me a massage, which in itself was great, but some of the talk, touch, and the fact that I was completely undressed made me uncomfortable. After leaving, my date and I discussed it and he was livid. Yes, I was the only one who told to completely undress. The relationship ended (he couldn't believe I didn't know), I confronted the chiropractor and then bought your book "The Idiot's Guide to Massage." (At this point, quite the appropriate title!!) The more I read the more interested in massage I became (and more informed.) I could not deny that though quite a bit of professional misconduct occurred in the massage I received the massage itself was a tremendous experience. Since then I have educated myself and continue to read on massage. I give quite a few and the people who have had my massages say I have a
My daughter has FMS and I hope to find more information regarding massage therapy for this also. I hope to order your video on Swedish massage soon.

I'm am wanting to go to school and become a LMT. My question, since you teach and may be aware, is do you know of any government funding for massage school. I'm a single, middle-aged woman and my financial situation is quite limited. Any advice you could offer would be much appreciated.

I also want to thank you for the section on pet massage. It almost calms my dog (as calm as a Jack Russell can get I suppose!) My boss is a part-time estate planning attorney. On a few client visits while my boss has been discussing the client's estate plan with them, under the table I have been giving Fido neck massages. The clients have all commented on how well Fido took to me (they usually don't take that well to strangers). Fido and I just wink at each other.

Thank you for your time and your books. Any direction would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Kimberly
Coloma, Michigan

Dear Kimberly,

I was an actress for many years before my career in massage. The Actors Equity union helped to finance my massage school studies. They offered me financial assistance through a work study program that was offered to actors returning to school. Perhaps you are a member of some union that may offer some help ou? Check out the financial aid office of your local community college for even more ideas. They n have recommendations for school financing. I know there are some grants out there for women who are seeking career changes. These types of grants usually require an essay application and resume. Your college can help you to locate these grants. Also, the massage school you plan to attend might have some ideas for you.

I wish you the very best on your massage journey, Kimberly. It has been a most rewarding path for me. It is a wonderful, healing journey; a way to touch many lives, and to open oneself to deeper levels of sensitivity and self awareness.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Certifiable in Columbus

Dear Joan,

I've had an interest in yoga for over 20 that's when I did yoga with Liliias Folan on PBS TV channel then I got relaxed and got pregnant, Not having the knowledge of yoga I have today I quit yoga, but always kept my interest. To make a long story short I started a yoga class over a year ago and am very faithful I have always loved yoga My instructor made me her assistant now I teach more than she does. I read everything on Hatha Yoga I find and do the same with videos I know that doesn't make me a qualified teacher but the girls in my class like what I do. I am interested in getting certified I live in the Columbus, Ohio area, but haven't found any information on the matter, if you can help please answer.

**Namaste,
AT**

Dear AT,

There are several yoga schools in the Columbus area. Try Heartland Yoga at 614-268-2925 or Joyful Practice Yoga at 614-258-6022. Perhaps the teachers there can guide you to certification programs in your area. Also, check out Yoga Journal Magazine for more teacher training programs nationwide. Best wishes on your blessed journey!

**Namaste,
Joan**

College of DuPage

Dear Joan,

Today was my first visit to your web site. I have wanted to learn and practice yoga for quite some time now. I am excited to find you! I noticed that you teach classes at the College of Dupage. I am a student there and I noticed in the quarterly they are offering a Power Yoga Class within the Physical Ed. department. Do you teach this class? Would I be able to take the class even though I am not a P.E. major? Also, since I am a beginner is this a good course to begin with, or should I begin with Hatha Yoga? I have a lot of stress in my life and after working for years in a gym as a personal trainer and instructor, and now as a culinary student I have put a lot of stress on my body! I am looking to Yoga for a change, for physical health, mental and physical balance, and new insight and learning. So, where should I begin?

Thank you,
Kelly Moran

Dear Kelly,

I would speak directly with the instructor for the Power Yoga class (which is not me) about these questions. Her name is Trisha Fiske and she is in the PE Dept at 630-858-2800. Yoga is a stress - buster.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Holy Cow!

Dear Joan,

I have a question for you, I have been studying your Complete Idiot's guide to yoga and can't find what I have

learned is called the CAT-COW sequence. Unlike the cow (gomukhasana) pose you outline in the book, I have been trying to find out what the proper name for the other poses might be. The poses are done on hands and knees, starting from a straight back/table position, then arching and letting the back sag (Cat/Cow respectively). Mostly I am interested to learn if toes turned under is the same for both poses, or if it matters.

Any guidance to find this info that you can provide, I would appreciate.

Best to you also,
Lani

Dear Lani,

You describe the pose very well. I just call it the cat pose, but I have heard it called cat/cow before too. I do not consider it one of the classical asanas. It is rather a warm up movement for the spine that is used in many yoga classes. If someone out there knows more of a history to this pose than I do, please write in. Regarding the toes turned in or out, I do not think this matters for this movement.

Have a great day!

**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.

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.

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Yo Joan



Belly up!

Dear Joan,

hiya joan--I had a student who had episodes of nausea from yoga--she was also my best bud--so we worked and worked at it and finally--she was a morning student--we realized she was coming in with just a bit of coffee in her belly! I started bringing in some crackers and then she started eating just a bit on her own--also it would happen when we had a particularly strenuous class (often they were strenuous--cause I like em that way) and she was just over doing it--competing with me--wanting to be where I was in the pose so she pushed herself too hard--just some thoughts on your letter.



namaste!
Diane

Dear Diane,

Thanks, Diane. I am sure readers will appreciate hearing your experience regarding nausea and yoga. I think diet is extremely important in the effects of the postures. A proper diet is, after all, a part of the yoga study. A diet that is vegetarian based is ultimately the diet of choice. Thank you for bringing this importance of diet to our attention so well through your personal experience!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Balanced Yoga For Beginners

Dear Joan,

Hi, My name is Kimberley Davenport of Chadwick Productions and we have produced a 75 minute beginners Yoga video, **Balanced Yoga for Beginners with Kelly Maguire**. This classroom yoga format is set inside a beautiful renaissance
e. Yoga instructor Kelly, gently leads the class through a program of classic hatha yoga positions, chanting and deep
ation. The focus of the class is to promote a balance of physical and spiritual well-being.

Currently this video is being offered at Yoga.com, so you can check there if you'd like a sneak peak. I hope you will enjoy viewing Balanced Yoga for Beginners with Kelly Maguire.

Thank you for your consideration.
Kimberley Davenport
Chadwick Productions

Dear Kimberley,

I hope Yoyoga readers will check out your video through the posting of your letter here. It sounds great!

**Namaste,
Joan**

vv nat JOY!

Dear Joan,

I have begun the New Year on holiday in Sydney, Australia, where I stumbled across a copy of your book The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. I have practiced yoga for many years and have always felt the need to study further and perhaps become a yoga teacher myself, specializing in yoga for children.

Your book has overwhelmed me! It contains so much information regarding so many facets of yoga that I have become inspired to dedicate myself to further developing my understanding of yoga so that I can share it with others - particularly the Primary School children that I teach.

Thank you so much and best wishes for the New Year,
Suzanne Saunders
Melbourne Australia

r Suzanne,

Ahoy, Suzanne! Thank you for writing! It is a joy to hear the book is a joy because it was a joy researching and writing! Your joyful letter is joyfully appreciated. Just call me "Joyful Joan!"

Namaste,

Beautiful child

Dear Joan,

I have a 4 1/2 year old daughter with a mild case of spastic diplegia(cerebral palsy). I am hoping to find a children's' yoga instructor in my area. I live in Riverside. Do you know of anyone who specializes in kids' yoga who teaches nearby? Any info would be really appreciated. I myself am not a yogi. But I hope to use this opportunity to become one, in tandem with my future yogini. I also recently bought the Idiot's Guide to Yoga with Kids, which I'm working on finishing up. Looks like the appendices provide a lot of useful info.

Thank you.

Dear Thank you,

Great that you are enjoying the new CIG to Yoga with Kids. My co-author, Eve Adamson, wrote that book with a yoga teacher from NYC who specializes in teaching children. As far as local classes, please check out the local yoga paper called, "Yoga Chicago." In the back of this paper is a listing of yoga teachers and specialties. You can find the paper in health food stores or on the internet. I would recommend you get the book by Sonia Sumer, and "Yoga for the Special Child." It is a wonderful book with special attention to children with cerebral palsy and down syndrome. She teaches workshops regularly in the area and can be reached at (888) 900-YOGA. She can be found on the web at: [Yoga for the Special Child](#).

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



The sunny side



Dear Joan,

Hi there, This is my first time at your web site and I have many questions about yoga. I just borrowed your book "Idiots guide" from my sister and so far I'm really loving it, I haven't reached the poses chapters yet though. Any way, I have never tried yoga before and I want to be sure that my posture and poses are correct. The main purpose for me exploring yoga is not unfortunately for spiritual reasons, although maybe that will come later, but because I'm sick of being tense and in pain all the time. I thought yoga might be a good resource to help reduce the pain and tension in my body.

I live out here in southern California, South Orange County, Aliso Viejo specifically, and I was hoping you could point me in the right direction for good classes/teachers of Hatha Yoga. Again, I'm a complete novice so the baby step classes is where I would need to begin. Can you help me out or at least recommend a web site more specific to my local?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Tks,
Jane

Dear Jane,

Please pick up a copy of Yoga Journal Magazine which is available at most every major bookstore. It is published in southern California and advertises for many yoga schools and centers there. The California

Yoga Teachers Association is located in your area as well. You may want to call them and see if they have referrals for you. The best way to find a good teacher is to take a class, and when it feels right, come back for some more. Tell your teacher that you have not had any yoga before. Tell your teacher that you specifically want a beginners class. Let me know how your class search goes. There are scores of yoga classes in your area, so I have no doubt that with some minimal effort you will find the right teacher for you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Seasick in postures

Dear Joan,

I am a beginning yoga student who is having difficulty because of nausea and cold sweats in any posture requiring that my head go backwards, even if it's just in transition such as tilting the head back off the pad before going into a shoulder stand. Anything resembling a back bend is impossible without getting sick. I have solved the problem by taking Dramamine (sea sick pills) before a yoga session. In your experience with other students is this a permanent situation or will my body eventually adjust and is the Dramamine a good solution in the mean time?

Gene

Dear Gene,

This is a question that is better for your medical doctor to answer. I am not a pharmacist either, and I do not know the repercussions on your yoga practice of the drug you are taking. Your pharmacist may be able to help you further on your dramamine questions too. What you are experiencing in your yoga practice is not usual. Please consult your physician before continuing your yoga practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

ck relief

Dear Joan,

I had back surgery two years ago for a herniated disc. I think it's was pretty successful and continue to do exercises to me in physical therapy post surgery, but I was left with nerve damage and I sometimes experience pain from Usually this is relieved by doing my PT exercises. Could you suggest yoga exercises that might help too? Thank you.

Mary

Dear Mary,

I would suggest a meditation and breathing class to work with the pain. I would suggest you follow the advice of your physical therapist on the exercises to do for your condition. Find exercises to help you deepen the breath. Let your breath join the pain instead of battling it. Here is one exercise for you. Inhale deeply for 4 counts, exhale deeply for 8 counts. Continue this silently counted inhale/exhale for at least 5 minutes a day. Make this exercise your complete focus for this five minutes. Turn off the answering machines, the computer, the phone, and focus on this exercise. Write me back after you have been working with this exercise daily for at least a few weeks.

Waste,

India

Dear Joan,

I have long wanted to take up yoga, but have not yet managed to do so. However, as I am planning to spend the summer traveling in India, I would like to do so while I am out there, and as a student am hoping that this will allow me to do it more cheaply. Do you know of any links or organizations which would be helpful in finding yoga teaching while I am in India, and whether there are any preparations necessary before going to get maximum benefit?

Louise
Nottingham, England

Dear Louise,

I have never traveled to India; however, I do know that the many of the major yoga organizations in America have branches and some even have hospitals in India. Check out the Iyengar Institute, The Sivananda Center, The Himalayan Institute for starters. I would be interested to know how your travels experiences go. You may want to pick up one of Beryl Bender's Power Yoga books. She writes quite frequently of some of her India experiences from an American woman's perspective.-----Bon Voyage, and Happy travels.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Tantric

Dear Joan,

I was just wondering if you are someone you know teaches Tantric yoga? I am very interested in learning this new yoga practice.. If you do are know someone who does know I would like to know. Thank you for your time.

Dear Bo,

I do not know Tantric Yoga and do not know of anyone who teaches it in my area. I would suggest contacting the Theosophical Society of America in Wheaton. I believe I have seen them offering some related courses in this at some point.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Park DIstrict

Dear Joan,

Hi, my name is Nancy Kuhlman and I live in Lombard. I have taken 2 yoga classes here in Lombard, one at the Y and one through the park district. Although I enjoyed the yoga content of the classes, I was not satisfied with either the location or delivery of the information. I am very much interested in continuing to study Yoga, and am hoping you can direct me to local classes I might be able to take in the evenings. My knowledge is very basic, and I am determined to not lose what I have learned. Thanks so much for any information you may have.

Nancy
Lombard, IL

Dear Nancy,

Check out the Yoga Chicago Newspaper which comes out every two months. In the back of the paper is a listing of area classes and teachers. There are many in the Lombard area. I teach classes at College of Dupage, mon. and wed. mornings, new classes start next month in PE Dept. Call 630-858-2800 to register. I always list my classes on this web site. The connection to my class list is at the bottom of the home page.

I taught a yoga class this past fall at the York Park District in Lombard. It was a very special class. It was outside in the Gazebo, a beautiful large pond surrounded us. It was perfect weather, perfect number of students (6), assorted wildlife, even some hummingbirds joined us, it was peaceful and loving . I hope to be back there soon...

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yoga Overseas!

Dear Joan,

Hello everyone,

I am forwarding on this information from Anne Nakhoda in Singapore in relation to the International Yoga Teachers Association Convention (IYTA) 'Yoga for the dot com age' to be held in Singapore 13 - 16 September 2001 at the Hilton Hotel, Orchard Rd, Singapore. The program commences on Thursday 13 Sept. Registration from 4.00pm Reception 6.00 - 7.00 pm Official Opening 7.15 pm and it finishes with a Farewell 4.30 pm Sunday 16th.

The presenters are Swami Veda Bharati (Himalayan Yoga Institute) Kaliji (Tri-Yoga) and Michael Lee (Phoenix

Rising Yoga Therapy) The cost is S\$370, early bird at S\$340 before July 15th - includes all sessions, opening night reception, lunches and tea/coffee breaks on all three days and a dinner on Saturday night. Sessions start at 8am with optional meditation and chanting. Workshops and lectures start at 9am and continue to 5:30pm. We have structured it so that each participants will have an equal opportunity to attend all sessions. There will be a summary of the workshops etc. in the next International Light and a full program will be sent to those who register. - accommodation -as I mentioned on the phone it is probably easier and cheaper to get a package deal (to include re and hotel accommodation) from Australia or America Hotel rates in Singapore are very high. - we will be ing a few optional tours in this region to participants who wish to spend a few extra days. We will also offer an optional evening tour of Singapore of Friday 14th September. Hotels close to Hilton: Orchard Hotel, Hotel Negara, Mandarin Hotel, Goodwood Park Hotel, Marriot Hotel, Holiday Inn Scotts Rorchard Parade Hotel, Hotel Asia

For further details or bookings: contact Ann Nakhoda abbas@cyberway.com.sg

Namaste,
Margo

Dear Margo,

Thanks for the info, Margo! Wish I could go, but I am not able to. Maybe you will see some other yoyogers there though!

Namaste,
Joan

Sanskrit Scholars

Dear Joan,

-----Hi, My name's Whitney Cox. I'm a student at the University of Chicago in the South Asian Languages and Civilizations department. Beginning on March 29th until May 17th, I'll be teaching a class meeting once a week entitled Introduction to Sanskrit Language and Literature, through the University's Graham School for General Studies. If you are interested or if you know of any interested students, I would very much appreciate your passing on information regarding this course. I've included links to the Graham school web page as well as description of the class below. If anyone has any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at w-cox@uchicago.edu

INTRODUCTION TO SANSKRIT

Sanskrit is the oldest literary language of southern Asia and the earliest known ancestor of most European languages. Among its vast and varied literature are the scriptures of Hinduism and Buddhism, works on philosophy and yoga, and some of the world's most enduring literature. In this course, students will be introduced to the fundamentals of the structure and grammar of the language, as well as passages from original texts in Sanskrit. Topics will include: the Devanagari script, phonology and pronunciation, noun declension, basic sentence structure

and syntax. Short passages, drawn from such works as the Bhagavad-Gita and the Ramayana will be used to introduce and exemplify what is sometimes called the language of the gods. This course is intended for the interested amateur; no prior experience with South Asia or other foreign languages presumed.

iks,
...ney Cox Link to the Graham School: <http://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/>

Dear Whitney,

Thanks, Whitney! It sounds great! Maybe I will see you there...it is closer to home than China.

**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.
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.**

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Yo Joan



It works!

Dear Joan,

I have heard that massage is good for you, but I am nervous about getting one. What EXACTLY happens when you get a massage? How much do you have to undress?

Thanks,
dy



Dear Sandy,

It depends on the type of massage. Some massage like shiatsu and seated massage can be done fully clothed. Other forms of massage like swedish and deep tissue, one usually removes clothing. In a professional massage, you undress to your level of comfort. Some people completely undress, some leave on their undergarments, and some leave on their clothes. You can leave on whatever you do not feel comfortable taking off. A professional massage therapist will be sensitive to your concerns and will not push you to take off anything you do not want to. The massage therapist leaves the room while you remove whatever clothing you choose to and then you get under the covers of the massage table. Once you are comfortable and fully covered on the massage table, the therapist returns to your room. Your modesty is respected at all times.

During a traditional swedish massage, which is the kind most professional massage therapists advertise, your body will be fully covered by a sheet or blanket throughout the massage. The massage therapist will undrape only the specific area to be massaged. For example, she or he will undrape one leg and massage that leg. Then the massage therapist may undrape the back and massage the back, etc. The chest and genital areas are never massaged. Some massage therapists do or can massage parts of the chest area, but never around the nipple area. Many massage therapists avoid the stomach area too. (I happen to love a stomach massage and usually request that my stomach be included in the session.) The chest and the lower part of the body are draped in a stomach massage. Remember, only the part of the body that is being massaged is uncovered.

A standard full body swedish massage takes one hour, although some sessions may vary in length. A massage therapist will usually ask you about pressure as the massage is being given. Never hesitate to express that you would like more or less pressure. Every person is different in their sensitivity levels.

The health benefits of massage are numerous. Massage increases circulation, which helps your organs, muscles, bones run more smoothly. It helps connective tissue become more elastic. Massage increases the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood. Since decreased levels of oxygen are related to stress, and to diseases such as cancer and heart disease, regular massages can help to prevent stress and disease. Massage breaks up toxins in the body and helps these toxins eliminate from the body more effectively. Massage balances the nervous system. It helps balance the emotions too. And on top of all these wonderful things, it feels absolutely fantastic.

If you are uncomfortable getting a massage, ask a friend for a referral of a trusted therapist. Or call the American Massage Therapy Association in Evanston Illinois at 847-864-0123 for a referral of a certified therapist in your area. The AMTA has professional referrals all across the 50 states. Go with a friend to your first session. The friend can wait in the waiting room while you are getting your massage. Maybe your friend would even want to book one too! All in all, massage is a wonderful way to expand your self-awareness, increase your sensitivity, and improve your overall health. Once you get in touch, you'll want to stay in touch...

**Namaste,
Joan**

Southern Hospitality

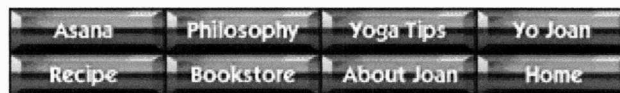
Dear Joan,

I live in Frankfort IL, I'm interested in teaching yoga again. I haven't taught a class in quite a few years. I had taken class's at the Himalayan institute and was a student of Brunett Eason for a few years. I feel a need to teach again, I'm looking for a class in the southern suburbs. Can you recommend a good teacher in this area?

**NAMASTE,
Julie**

Dear Julie,

I would recommend picking up a copy of Yoga Chicago at <http://www.yogachicago.com>. This free newspaper lists teachers by areas in the city where they teach. I do not know of teachers specifically in your area, but there are at least a dozen listed in the paper that might work for you. The Himalayan Institute in Evanston may also have more specific referrals for you too. Call 847-475-6000.



Yo Joan



Returning on a jet plane!

Dear Joan,

Hello..my name is Chris ..I'm from New Jersey. To refresh your memory, I had e-mailed you several times with questions back in 2000...(leavin on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again)...remember? Well anyway, I have left on a jet plane and I really haven't come back. I'm thinking the transcendental meditation technique may not be for me. You see, I'm experiencing some strange things. First off, I'm not appreciating my surroundings like the foundation said I would. In fact, I feel quite distant from the physical world...I'm detached, but I don't feel like I connect with my surroundings. I'm not sure if I am "breaking out of bondage" or I'm just plain "out there". I would think if I was "breaking out of bondage", my experience would be a little bit more pleasant. However, when I do yoga, I feel "more alive". I read in your "Idiot's guide to Yoga" that meditation lifts you up, but does not ground you, whereas yoga lifts you up and grounds you at the same time. I'm afraid of abandoning my transcendental meditation technique for fear that I won't obtain cosmic, god, or unity consciousness. Can I still get there with yoga alone? Please let me know.

Also, I just want to share with you the program I have been doing. Upon wake-up, I begin with asanas. I start with full lotus for thirty seconds. I then proceed by toning my body (massaging my body with my hands) to increase circulation. I then do neck rolls on the floor. My program then goes as follows: camel, seated hands- to- toe stretch, shoulderstand, plow, shoulderstand, plow, seated hands-to-toe stretch, shoulderstand, plow, lotus humility pose, fish, seated hands-to-toe stretch, cobra (3 times for 7 seconds at a time), locust (2 times for 7 seconds at a time), bow pose. the wheel, seated spinal twist, standing forward bend, relaxation pose (for 2 minutes), pranayama (5 minutes), then finally I transcend (meditate) for 20 minutes...then I lay down afterwards for 10 minutes and stabilize. I repeat this entire sequence in the evening as well. If you have any suggestions, I would like to know. Hope to here from you.

Namaste,
Christopher
New Jersey



r Christopher,

**"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding."
 ——Kahlil Gibran, 'The Prophet'**

Where does our yoga book say that meditation does not ground you? Meditation certainly can ground you into deeper realities of existence. However, hatha yoga can bring you into a deeper realization and acceptance of your body which can make meditation practice easier and also often more enjoyable and productive.

Divinity is all around us, in the movement of leaves, the songs of a bird, the cries of a baby, the smile of a senior, the heart of a loved one. Detach from your desires, and watch what happens in the process. Simply now, watch your breath, observe the movement. Yoga is deeply connected with meditation. In fact, many would say they are inseparable. A deep consistent yoga practice is a meditation practice.

Regarding your asana practice. It sounds lovely. In my practice, I am not one to follow specific sequences. The postures vary daily. I move with what my body is asking of me. However, I do realize that many people prefer a specific sequence to work with. I instruct classes in an assortment of postures that can be helpful for an assortment of conditions. I would encourage you to continue listening ever deeply to your body and to what it is asking of you and telling you. You may find that one day a boat pose will replace a fish pose, or any assortment of postures may be requested. Listen to what your body is telling you. It is all a matter of listening with a beginner's mind. As my friend, Bruce Symond's, so beautifully said, "with every breath you are born again." With rebirth comes a chance to experience anew situations, emotions, postures. Begin your practice in a seated meditation, when you are ready to move, let your breath guide you into the movements. Begin by following your breath.

**Namaste,
 Joan**

A Hip Guy

Dear Joan,

I'm hoping that you can help me out. I broke my hip almost 3 months ago and I am just now walking around with the aid of a cane and/or crutches. I was fortunate in that I did not have to have a hip replacement--I just have a plate, a pin and some screws holding me together now! I have not been able to do many asanas as my movement is seriously limited. I have tried to use the time to study pranayama and to deepen my meditation studies. I am anxious to "return to the mat" but I am worried that a class may be too difficult to participate in. A full forward bend always feels good, but it leaves me wanting MORE!!! Is there a series of asanas that I could do? Is there a video that would be of help? Any advice that you could give me would be greatly appreciated! Thanks in advance.

Namaste-
 Jason
 NYC NY

Dear Jason,

I would recommend an Iyengar Yoga Therapy class for you. There are many to choose from in NYC. Studios are listed in the phone book. These classes work with props to aid in the movement of the postures, putting stress on the body. Talk to your teachers and find out about their training before taking a class. Because of your condition, you need personal and experienced attention. I would not recommend specific poses for you on the internet. I would instead recommend that you study face to face, hip to hip with an experienced instructor who can see you and work with your condition in the best and healthiest way. I would recommend picking up BKS Iyengar's new book, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health," and check out the sections on osteoarthritis for the hips. These are gentle yoga stretches and specific guidance for those with delicate hips. Even so, I would still recommend working with these postures under the direct tutelage of an Iyengar trained teacher. Direct teaching is best for you.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Illumination!

r Joan,

I came across your wonderful website while searching for yoga, and turned out I already owned your book "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" all along. I've got a question about yoga routine. I've been suffering from a digestion problem (diarrhea, constipation, nausea etc.) I have gone to GI doctors and been checked inside out and they found NOTHING wrong with my GI tract, not a single bacteria, virus or any other physical disorder. I wonder if there's any yoga asanas that can help me deal with the indigestion, or any food/diet that you know might help. Thanks a lot for your help!

Sincerely,
Ayesha
Allen, TX

Dear Ayesha,

I would recommend a vegetarian diet with lots of clear water and juices. This is gentle on the system and will help to purify it. I would recommend using a neti pot to clear the sinuses and open the nasal passages. This will make the smell of healthy food more tempting and appealing. A Neti Pot is sold in most Yoga Magazines and at the Himalayan Institute web site at <http://www.himalayaninstitute.org>. It consists of a small pot that you fill with lukewarm water with a pinch of salt. The spout is shaped to fit on the end of a nostril. You tilt your head forward and let the water enter the nostril and angle your head so the water comes out the other open

nostril. This Net Pot is also wonderful for those suffering from various nasal and breathing problems, such as allergies and hay fever.

Before your breakfast in the morning, slowly sip a cup of lukewarm water with a pinch of lemon and honey. This will gently start the digestive system. After spending many hours in sleep, it is best to gently wake your system up instead of shocking it with caffeinated beverages and heavy foods. I would suggest regulating your eating to breakfast like a king, lunch like a queen, and dinner like a pauper. This means, make your lightest meal in the evening and do not eat at least a few hours before going to sleep.

Yoga therapy can be done to help heal the parts of the body effected by your ailments. Yoga therapy involves using body postures that stretch and stimulate effected organs or parts of the body, while blocking others. As BKS Iyengar states in his book, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health," "The aim is not to cure but to target the cause." Some of the poses specifically recommended for your conditions are, Butterfly (where the body is seated with soles of feet pressed together and knees falling out to the side), Bridge (body lying with back on floor with knees bent and hips and buttocks lifted off the floor), and Shoulderstand (Back on the floor, legs are rolled up and raised over the heart - an alternative is simply to lie on the floor and place the legs up against a wall. Rest here as long as you comfortably can.) These are simply some suggestions to get started. I would highly recommend your taking a yoga class to experience a more regular yoga practice. In time, you may very well find that your eliminating problems will become illuminating. For in yoga terms, elimination is the key to illumination.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Worthy Purchase

Dear Joan,

Alloha Joan, Thanks for this wonderful website and treasury of information. I have Mr. Iyengar's Light on Yoga - it is a wealth of information and I find myself referring back to it again and again. How does his new book - Yoga the path to Holistic Health compare..(?) Is it worth buying or is the information pretty much the same?

Thanks for your time.
Om Shanti
Namaste
Meg

—
r Meg,

The information in BKS Iyengar's new book is quite different. It includes the use of yoga props that his first book, "Light on Yoga," did not offer. His new book is quite reflective of what Iyengar Yoga has evolved into over the years via yoga props. Its therapeutic aspects are highlighted and the postures are beautifully illustrated to make them easily understandable. Iyengar did have a list of ailments and posture sequences in "Light on Yoga," but, this new book is more easily displayed in that each posture sequence is photographed, and specific prop use is demonstrated through clear, beautiful pictures. It is hard, if not impossible to top a book, of which "Light on Yoga" has become, but his new book is reflective of new times and new entations. In my eyes, they are very different books. Both books are enriching and inspiring. One book is reflective of a master in his younger years of the 1960's and the other reflective of a master in his senior years of 2001.

Namaste,
Joan

Yo to Singapore!

Dear Joan,

I've read your book - "the complete idiot's guide to yoga" and was impressed by it. This explains why I am a regular visitor to your web site. I am interested to become a yoga instructor in Singapore. I am curious to find out how one becomes a yoga instructor in the States. Is this any pre-requisites required? Any other information will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.
LC Lee
Singapore

Dear LC,

There are currently no national certification requirements for yoga teachers in the United States. There are a vast assortment of schools and training programs for those who want to teach yoga. The programs run anywhere from a weekend course to several years of study in passing a yoga school's certification requirements. Your personal practice will largely determine what type of teacher you become. Yoga is more than postures. It is a lifestyle approach. That is why I recommend longer training programs so that you become a lifestyle teacher. In order to be this type of teacher, you must live, or at least sincerely attempt to live, what you teach. A longer training program will also bring you into the company of others on the same life path. This can be encouraging and rewarding in many ways. Some of the organizations that offer extended training programs are: The Temple of Kriya Yoga, The Iyengar Institute, The Himalayan Institute, The Sivananda Center, Integral Yoga, Ananda Yoga. All these organizations can be found on the internet.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Just call me Sparky!

Dear Joan,

Dear Joan,I don't have a question for you I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed reading "The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga". I am a 20 year old college student and am looking into yoga, meditation, and various eastern philosophies to learn how to grow first through my spiritual being before entering this crazy world that awaits me when I graduate. The guide to Yoga was easy to read and I especially liked the "wise yogi" sections. I am now practicing the sun salutation every morning and can't seem to stop reading about ways of enlightenment. Thank you for sparking a new interest.

Sincerely,
Caryn

---r Caryn,

I sparkle as Sparky!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Scottish Yoga

Dear Joan,

My name is Ian and I have been reading your wonderful Meditation book. A guide to Meditation.I found the book very informative and also very witty. I have dedicated myself to Yoga and meditation, Crystals etc.I find true peaceful beings

like yourself such an inspiration to me and to the whole world. I truly love finding Kindred Spirits. I must say I would be much rather sat in the pictures on your website than be stuck here in Glasgow, Scotland. But we take what we are given. I am currently at University learning to become a website designer and I was Very impressed by yours. I would love to attend one of your workshops sometime in my life and I hope that happens. My plans are to move to Hawaii after my studies.(Well it is my dream!). Well I will be in touch again in the future and do you have any tips for starting my own Yoga school here in Scotland? I would be very grateful if you could pass on some of your knowledge my way.

Love and Peace
Ian
Scotland

Dear Ian,

Thank you. My tip for starting a school would be to start small. Start teaching classes locally. Rent a space. See how that goes. Learn from the classes you teach. And gradually expand into your own school. Just as in hatha yoga, we start by watching the breath, and then bring an arm slowly up, or a leg slowly back. All movements are done with awareness, one breath at a time.

I believe in dreams coming true. Your writing your dreams down is the first step. You have now put one of your dreams in motion. You have let the universe know of your plans, so that the universe can help you. Hold onto your dream, and share it with those who inspire you and encourage you to achieve your dream. In this way, your dream becomes reality. I encourage you. I believe you can open a beautiful yoga school in Scotland. And I would be most honored to be one of your students one day.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Horrifying Reality

Dear Joan,

My letter concerns one of the Ten Ethical Principles. Non Violence.

You may be aware of the Foot and Mouth crisis in Britain at the moment. We are killing tens of thousands of animals each day.

How can I control the anger I feel at the incompetence of the Politicians/Public Service employees I see each evening on our National News justifying this cull. In fact how does a yogi control their emotions when he sees or reads about the injustice done to any member of the human race. We are bombarded with stories/photos from all over the world of stice and I find it difficult to control my emotions.

Namaste,
Peter
Wales

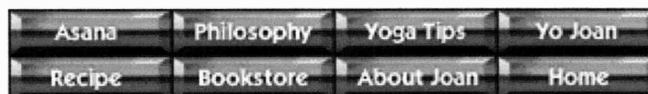
Dear Peter,

"I have learned through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world." —Mahatma Gandhi

Dead carcasses of animals across a countryside are shocking, horrifying, and sickening. Dead carcasses packaged neatly across our supermarkets are acceptable, enjoyable, and eaten. Thousands and thousands of animals are killed every single day to fill our supermarkets, our fast food chains, our restaurants. The demand is high. It is economics. The supermarkets, fast food chains, restaurants are supplying the demands that we make. If only our eyes would see the reality of dead carcasses across a countryside with every slaughter, that is going on every moment, every day. Perhaps then something would change. For change to happen, it takes one person. One life decision. It is your decision, Peter. It is my decision. It is each one of us, independently, together.

**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.
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.**



Yo Joan



A Model Yogini

Dear Joan,

I am a modeling and acting teacher for the past 10 years, I am interested in yoga and massage, how do i get started? Please help,

Love and Light
Christiana



Dear Christina,

There are numerous schools across the country offering training programs in yoga and massage. When I started years ago, there were very few....now they are everywhere! Both schools can be quite expensive. Do not judge a school by the expense of the classes. Determine the best school for you by the quality of the instruction and by the years of experience in the field. There are no national certification requirements yet for either massage or yoga. Massage is coming close to mandating schooling requirements but yoga still has a way to go.

My suggestion is to study and practice, study and practice, study and practice.

Namaste,

Joan

~ olly Gee!

Dear Ellie May,

Con grat-u-lay tions on 101! i enjoys reading the iss yous out by the see-ment pond, though I cain't seem to git ol' duke the dawg to do that "down wert dawg" thing you keep ciperin about.

Kind regards, little lady,
Jethro

Dear Jethro,

I dig your style! But this is issue 102. Miss Jane, where are you? Get this guy and his dog a yoga mat and off the see-ment!

**maste,
in
cc Ellie May**

Pregnant with possibilities...

Dear Joan,

I ran across your column in The Suburban Life Newspapers and wondered if you might have any information on pre-natal yoga (a video or class in a close suburb.) I live in Lombard and just finished my first trimester...a friend of mine saw a class downtown but I haven't had any luck finding any in my area. Can you help?

Laura
Lombard, Illinois

Dear Laura,

"Yoga Among Friends" Yoga Studio in Downers Grove recently offered a pre-natal yoga day workshop taught by a yoga teacher and RN. You may want to call them to see where they can direct you for more classes 630-960-5488. You may want to also check with your local hospital as many nurses are now becoming yoga teachers and may offer classes. If not, maybe you could suggest they should?

**Namaste,
Joan**

Me, Myself, and I

Dear Joan,

I haven't written in a while and just wanted to let you know I'm still enjoying your website on a regular basis. I do have one question - what prompted you to get into yoga and meditation in the first place? I'm glad you did because you have become my "teacher" through your books and website.

na

Dear Jonna,

It was a gradual process for me. I was first introduced to yoga in a college class I took in 1976. I loved how I felt after the class, very peaceful and centered. After the class ended, I went my disco ways, and then got back into yoga around 1980 when I lived in California down the road from the Self-Realization Fellowship. This is where my love for yoga bloomed. I was troubled and searching for answers to world problems aka inner problems. I studied meditation there, and I studied hatha yoga at the Sivananda Center in LA. I never even considered teaching at that time. I was working in the arts, and very focused on my career. Yoga helped me with focus and relaxation. I started teaching yoga when I moved back to the Chicago area in 1993. I was not longer feeling fulfilled with my work in the arts, and so, on a lark, I enrolled in yoga teachers school. It was the only school around at that time. It was incredible! I completed a 14 month yoga teachers training program at the Temple of Yoga in Chicago, and a two year massage therapist certification program from the Wellness and Massage Training Institute in Willowbrook, Illinois. I started working full time in massage/part time in yoga. Believe it or not, yoga and massage were not that big a thing then. Now I am working full time in yoga/part time in massage. Through it all I meditate. I believe meditation will be the next "popular movement" , as both yoga and massage lead to this. For more info on my herstory, you can check out the 'about joan' section of this bsite, and gee, thank you for asking.

**Namaste,
Joan**

A Vegetarian German Irish Yogini

Dear Joan,

First of all I would like to thank you for your wonderful webpage, thank you for the CIG to Yoga and last but not least a big thank you for the CIG to Meditation!!! If books are like friends they are certainly my best buddies offering advice and being a constant source of motivation and inspiration!

My first question is a little bit trivial but as I do not know other vegetarians and vegetarianism is looked at as a mild case of lunacy by colleagues, friends and family alike, I would like to ask you anyway. Most of the time I am in control to when it comes to what I eat but when I am invited I find it difficult to get the message through that I do not eat meat. So what do I do once the spaghetti bolognese are on the table? I know I should do what I feel is right, but declining a meal someone has prepared investing time and love does not feel right (I guess "do no harm" includes the cook's feelings?). And eating the meat does not feel right any more either. (I find by now that even the odor of fresh meat wafting over from the supermarket counter does not agree with me any more). Furthermore the repertoire of meat based dishes of most people is very limited and I do not want to end up not being invited any more because my diet is "too complicated".

I am doing Yoga for 3 years now, even though only the past 8 months "for real", i.e. every weekday in the morning and once a week in a yoga class. How "good" do you actually have to be to be a teacher/start with the training required? Yoga has become a very important part of my life and I would simply love to teach it some day.

Thank you very much for all your work!

Love,
Silke
A German in Ireland

Dear Silke,

Wow, lots of questions. First of all, regarding vegetarianism. I would suggest not trying to force your yogic views on others. Many people are threatened by vegetarians (maybe because in their deepest

heart, they know it is the way to go). Instead, simply, kindly, turn down the meat dishes. Eat more salad or buns on those friendly dinner visits. When you go home, then you can cook up a storm! I have heard that some people resent having to make special dishes for vegetarians at dinner parties, so I would not recommend requesting this either. If your hostess asks ahead of time, just say that you do not eat meat, but you are happy with whatever she makes. Most meals have potatoes or rice or something like that as a side dish. You can make it your main dish!

Do not have a hard time turning down acts of love. If someone makes a goose and is thrilled for you to eat it, you must find a way to comfortably resist and decline. If the temptation is still there to eat the goose, then study your desire but do not be ruled by it. If you are ruled by your desires, then you eat the goose. Don't beat up yourself about it afterwards either, because that is a form of violence too. Simply observe your actions, your reactions, study yourself. I do not consider vegetarianism trivial. I think it is a very large and quite important issue. Our society kills thousands and thousands of sentient animals daily for the sole purpose of feeding us. If one person eats one less cow, you are doing something quite significant and meaningful. It takes just one person...it sounds like that person is you (and you, and you, and you too)!

If you love to teach and you love yoga, you would make a wonderful yoga teacher. Check out a local yoga school's requirements. How "good" does one have to be a teacher? How could I possibly answer that? A 10 on the richter scale perhaps? You just taught us something, I just taught something, I learned something, and so it goes. Teach and you shall learn.

Namaste,
Joan

A Heavy Question

Dear Joan,

I have just begun practicing yoga and wanted to know if yoga is sufficient for weight loss. I have always been a health conscious person, but my lifestyle changed so significantly this past year that I have gained about forty pounds. I am getting back on track with my eating and am enjoying the benefits of yoga. However, I wonder if I still need to do cardiovascular or aerobic exercise in addition to yoga to lose these pounds as quickly as possible. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and expertise!

A New Yogini

PS- Another question I have is whether some tingling in the feet is normal after practicing certain poses. I notice my

feet feeling as if they fell asleep at times.

Dear New Yogini,

Yoga is a lifestyle approach. Yes, yoga can assist you in weight loss, if you see it as a lifestyle approach. However, most people see it as a series of exercises. In that case, I would also include some extended aerobic activity with your yoga exercise. The lifestyle approach is a process of change. If you want to loose weight quickly, it is necessary to do other types of exercise. Yoga, whether viewed as exercise or lifestyle, is a process and is not a quick fix.

The feet tingling question, I do not know what postures you are doing. Inversions can create this because the body is turned upside down and blood drains out of extremities and rushes back in when upright. These inversions flush impurities out of the body and aid in effective circulation. Inversions are not for everyone though, especially those with heart problems or detached retinas. Check with your physician if your tingly feet continue.

**Namaste,
Joan**

...the second time around...

Dear Joan,

Hi Joan,

I am a yoga teacher in New Jersey. I have been teaching yoga at a university for approximately 3 1/2 years now. It took me a while to decide to use a "text book" because there are so many wonderful practitioners out there, but the books seemed so highly specialized and beyond the interest level of what twenty-somethings, with no yoga experience, taking a one credit Physical Education Requirement because they "need it to graduate" could really utilize. Then my boyfriend stumbled upon your book and bought it as a gift for me. As I read your book, I realized it was a perfect text book for my students. It was simple, humorous, gave enough information so they could understand conceptually and take something home with them, yet not so complex (philosophically) that it would lose their interest and be ultra demanding intellectually. After all, they thought this was going to be an "easy A" and didn't realize how profound it is to "just breathe!"

So, here we are about 2 years along in the decision to use your book and I am betting there is a second edition. My co-instructor and I are wondering if you and your publisher have a program to provide (gratis) copies of your most

current edition to college profs using your book??? If so, could you direct me so that I can get us signed up? Using your book has been a big success with the kids and I believe it is because you also teach at the university level, so you really understand the needs there.

Thanks in advance for your help with this matter as well as for the support your work in this Idiot's Guide to Yoga has given me in proliferating the boundless benefits of yoga to a group that desperately needs to connect with nselves.

Sincerely and in peace,
Madelana

Dear Madelana,

Thank you for your kind words, and thank you for the gifts your boyfriend brings. I do not know of any deals the series can offer you, but I would recommend you contact them directly at <http://www.idiotsguides.com> Perhaps you can work something out with them? I am from the background to think that anything is possible, but I am simply an author. I have no involmment in the publishing of these books.

And yes, our second expanded edition came out for the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga in January of this year, 2001. I am still breaking open the plastic screw tops of sparkling cider bottles over this! YoHoo! Happy New Year Everyone!!!!

**maste,
n**

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Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Bet he netis



Dear Joan,

I have read about jala neti, that is when you use a special pot to pour salt water through your nostrils. Have you tried this? If so, could you tell me a little about it and its effects. It says it should cure or/and prevent colds. could you please tell me your experiences of the neti pot, how much water and how much salt to use. When to do, when not to do, how to do it and so on. Or is it anyone else reading Yo Joan who have some experiences? As much as possible is very appreciated!

Thanks for your answers every time!

Lars

Dear Lars,

For those reading who are not familiar with the neti pot, it is a special pot used for a nasal cleansing technique in yoga practices. It is part of what is termed "shat kriyas," which are purification rituals of hatha yoga. Neti pots are shaped to fit close to the nostril so that you can pour the water in one nostril and tilt your head slightly forward, down, and angled, so that the water will come out the other nostril. It takes some practice to get the water to come out, but once you get the right angle - it's smooth saline. The pot is filled with lukewarm water and with a pinch of salt added to it.

My personal experiences with the neti pot have been outstanding. I have used it for a few years now. I use it when I feel a cold coming on. It clears out my cold viruses beautifully. Nasal cleansing has also been said to stimulate the optic nerve, which strengthens ones eyesight. I also use it after being in smokey environments or in unusually strong air pollution. Some people use it everyday. I don't. I just use it when I feel the need to. It is important that the water is not too hot so that it does not burn your nose. I

do not live in the city, or suffer from allergies, but if I did, you can be sure I would be using the neti pot even more than I do.

You can purchase a neti pot at a local health food store, yoga center, or through ads in yoga magazines.

**namaste,
Joan**

It takes more than protein...

Dear Joan,

I have been trying to improve my energy and also my digestive system by trying the breathing techniques outlined in the idiot's guide. I am unsure however which one is best to pursue and how long each day i should practice the technique. I have also been using a neti to clear my sinusitis, again how long do i need to do this for each day?

thank you for your help,
Darren
UK

Dear Darren,

It is recommended to use one full pot for each nostril. Some people use half a pot for each nostril. It is really personal to your taste and nose. Your nose knows what's right. Experiment and see what works best for you. Regarding what techniques are best for your particular digestive system and energy. A book plants the seed, then one needs to nourish the plant by studying with a yoga teacher one on one. It is difficult, if not impossible, for me to give you directions in what is best for you without knowing you. As noted the book, shitali, or cooling breath, is considered particularly effective for digestion. This breathing technique involves drawing in the breath through your curled tongue as if you are sipping through a straw. (If you can't curl your tongue, just pretend you are and maybe someday you will be able to. I have been trying for years and I still can't curl it. Some people can immediately!) When your lungs are full, bring your tongue into your mouth and close the mouth. Lower your chin slightly and hold the breath for a comfortable few seconds. Then exhale comfortably. This technique is also quiet effective if your body is overheated. With summer coming up quick, its a good technique to know about. The digestive hatha (physical posture) suggestions in the book: shavasana, fish, child, sun salutations, are to get you started with the physical yoga postures too. They fan the digestive and respiratory organs through compressions and extensions. Once you are started through the guidance of a book, then you need to study with a teacher to refine your practice and tailor it more to your specific body.

Namaste,

Joan

Flexibility + Strength = Hatha

Dear Joan,

What an inspiration you are. Thank you. I sit at a computer all day and more of the night than I wish to admit. Doing so over time has tightened up my hips and led to some pain and stiffness. As we all know flexibility equals strength. Can you recommend poses that will help loosen up my hips? I participate in rowing, swimming and skiing on a regular basis and am a beginning yogi.

Thanks
Andrea

Dear Andrea,

Flexibility does not necessarily equal strength. Someone can be extremely flexible and not strong, just as someone can be extremely strong and not flexible. It is often more difficult to teach extremely flexible students because they are frequently not as aware of their limitations and so are more prone to injury. People with limited flexibility, frustrated as they are, are often acutely aware of their limitations.

Some hip opening suggestions: Tree pose, Hero pose, Butterfly pose, and Sun Salutation. The sports you mention tend to put more emphasis on arm development over legs. Certainly any skier or swimmer will tell you that they need strong legs too (and certainly feel this in a work-out), but the upper body still often pulls us through these sports in many ways. Dancer pose is another pose I would highly recommend for you. I do not have a pic of it or I would post it for you. Basically, stand straight, bend the knee and bring the heel back toward the tailbone. Grab hold of this ankle with the same side arm. Now bend slightly forward and lift the other arm straight in the air. Pull your heel away from you. Both arms are straight. Keep your gaze steady. A beautiful dancer is balanced and steady.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Island Fever

Dear Joan,

My name is Linzy, I was browsing through your web pages and I am fascinated. I want to know everything there is to know. I have tried all sorts of lifestyle changes and exercise routines, NOTHING WORKS FOR ME. I think yoga sounds ideal. I have one problem, as I live on an island there is no classes of this sort. I would prefer to do this at home with as much guidance as I could get, can you help?

Linzy

Dear Linzy,

Keep tuning in, develop a daily practice, and find out. Aloha, Linzy.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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[Home](#) | [Asana For The Week](#) | [YogaPhilosophy](#) | [Yoga Tips](#) | [YoJoan](#)
[Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#) | [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [AboutJoan](#)



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Local Yoga



Dear Joan,

My wife and I have been interested in studying Yoga for years. Saw your column and hope that you could recommend a great teacher in our area. We live in Western Springs, IL. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Bob

Dear Bob,

I would recommend Kathleen Wright who teaches at Garden of Yoga in LaGrange Park. She has many years of experience in teaching an Iyengar style of yoga which is very focused on proper alignment in postures. Garden of Yoga is at: 928 Barnsdale, LaGrange Park, Phone - 708.802.1329.

Namaste,
Joan

Mahalo!

Dear Joan,

Where would I look for reading/tape/class availability's for a 9 year old boy who swims competitively? He started when he was 6. He is an excellent swimmer and active in soccer and baseball. I cannot help but think Yoga will and and strengthen his swimming capability in the muscle area. If he could learn breathing control and utilize the concentration yoga takes, it would be an additional enhancement for him. And it will wash over into his everyday life and follow him into adulthood. He is a very bright and caring little boy, and I think he would truly enjoy and benefit from exposure to and use of Yoga. He is one of 6 grandchildren, and lives in Suffolk, Va. (That's near Norfolk). I live in Hawaii on Oahu. We are fortunate to be able to participate in Yoga classes twice a week thru our health insurance plan at Kaiser. The teacher is a gentleman who has been teaching about 5-6 years. He practices Iyengar Yoga. We started in Jan 2000, this is our second year. Wish I had known about it long before last year. At 60 and 62, any port in a storm helps, and Yoga has really made our everyday activities more enjoyable and "do-able". Can finally get into a shoulder stand without a chair or the wall-- my next goal is the headstand. So far, am plowing thru the variations of the shoulder stands- sometimes the creaky bones don't want to co-operate, but I am getting there, slow but sure. Looking forward to getting some info for the grand baby. Mahalo-- from the Rainbow State-----

Cheerio,
Bonnie

Dear Bonnie,

Mahalo, Bonnie! Great that you are advancing and enjoying your yoga studies in Hawaii. Also, wonderful that you want to introduce your grandchild to yoga! Since your background is in Iyengar yoga, I have located an Iyengar studio in Herndon Virginia. I am not sure how far that is from your grandson. Their website is: <http://www.healthadvantageyoga.com>. Do contact them for a teacher in the nearest location.

Since your grandson is a swimmer, you may also want to introduce him to Watsu. This is a combination of Shiatsu (pressure point) massage, and yoga movements in the water. Check out their website at <http://www.waba.edu/>

**Namaste,
Joan**

Every season has its reason

Dear Joan,

I am in a bit of a pickle right now. I have been practicing yoga faithfully now for a while. I do sessions with around 5 warm - ups and 13 asanas. I have one problem. When I meditate (I only meditate 2 or 3 minutes a day), I feel uncomfortable. This is because I am unable to do the lotus pose, the suggested meditation asana. I, of course, can do the half - lotus, but I think it might be easier if I did the full lotus. When I lift one foot onto the opposite thigh, my other leg barely moves, even if I pull on it with my hand. I know I shouldn't strain myself, and that if I can't do

something I should be patient, but I want to know why. Every yoga book, website, and video seem to make it seem like anyone can do it. It is possible that, since my body is not fully developed, and my legs have not grown entirely (I am an 11 year old boy). Is this the problem? Please help me.

Namaste,
Frustrated Without a Good Reason

Dear Frustrated Without a Good Reason,

I must be quite Joan with you, I think you have a VERY good reason to be frustrated. The judgmental mind is a very frustrating thing, The more judgmental it becomes, the more frustrating it becomes. Lotus pose is an advanced yoga meditation pose. If it looks like "everyone" is doing it, do not be fooled by appearances. For example, someone could be in this pose and also be in agony over their hurting, twisted ankles - in this case, they are simply sitting strangely and not doing yoga. Yoga is uniting the body and mind into a balanced state of consciousness. When commercials tell us that everyone "drinks milk," or "eats pork" or "loves Mcdonald's"- does this mean it is true?

Eleven to thirteen years old is a very good age to begin a serious hatha yoga practice. I hope your parents will find you a good yoga teacher to help guide you in your personal studies. A teacher who will encourage you and explain that half lotus is not half a posture. It is a full meditation pose. The Buddha sat in half lotus. The Buddha was an exceptional meditator.

Through the study of the hatha yoga postures, your hips will open and this will bring your knees closer to the floor. Some people spend many years in hatha yoga practice and still do not have their knees touching the floor when seated with crossed legs. Does this mean they are not advanced yogis? No. They may even be enlightened beings!

u are right. You know patience is part of the yoga practice. You are wise. Your body will slowly adjust to the practice. There is no rush. Simply continue your practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Where to focus?

Dear Joan,

How long each day should I practice breathing techniques to improve energy? What is the best thing to focus the mind whilst meditating, mine keeps reminding me of all the chores I have to do!!! Finally what is the best way to relieve anxiety, using yoga?

always your advice is greatly appreciated!
Darren



Dear Bob,

There are wonderful books to refer you to, for responses to these questions are lengthier than my column permits. First suggestion: Read "Path of Fire and Light" by Swami Rama. He goes into detail about specific breathing meditation techniques. There are two volumes of the book. Both volumes are very worth reading. The books can be ordered through Amazon.com.

The best thing to focus on while meditating is something uplifting and something that can keep your focus. It brings to mind a wonderful story the director of the Chicago Sivananda Yoga Center told this weekend at a yoga retreat I attended. I will expound upon the story in traditional Yoyoga style...

**Once upon a yogi time there was a man who was having a very difficult time focusing his attention in meditation. He implored upon his teacher,
"Teacher, I am quite discouraged. My mind can not stay still in meditation. What should I do?!"**

∴ teacher replied, "Focus on the light of the steady candle for one hour and then come back to me."

The man did the practice and then ran back to his teacher, "I could barely sit for one hour with focus on the candle! It was torture. My mind was everywhere but on the candle!"

The teacher replied, "Try focusing on your breath. Do not let your mind stray anywhere else. Simply focus on the breath. Work with this today, and come see me again tomorrow."

The man came back the next day out of breath. "Teacher this was so difficult. I do not want to stop breathing, but I definitely want to stop focusing on the breath. It brings up memories of all sorts that I can not shake."

The teacher replied, "Tell me, dear student, what you love."

The man was a farmer. He deeply thought of what brought him most joy. Finally he replied in earnest, "What I love the most in my life is my ox. He helps me in the field. I would not eat if it were not for him. He never complains. He is a sturdy and simple support in my life that I treasure dearly."

The teacher replied, "I want you to go to your meditation room, close your eyes and meditate on your ox."

The man did as he was told. A day passes, two, then three...the man did not come out of the meditation room. The teacher began to worry and went into the room to see what was happening."

The man was so happy to see the teacher..."Teacher! I am so glad you are here...my horns are so large and my body so big, I can not get out of the door of this room!"

I so...what you focus on is very important to your meditation practice. Let this focus be something that _____es you into deep aspects of your being. I would recommend reading further on Ishvar Pranidhana - the 5th niyama in yoga. Translated it means, "Centering on the Divine."

Finally, regarding the release of anxiety. The entire study of yoga is devoted to a more balanced state of consciousness. One that is free of anxiety, stress, and competition. Simply open your heart and let your studies guide you in this inevitable direction. Om shanti.

**Namaste,
Joan**

My heart is with you.

ir Joan,

My name is Michael and just recently my father had a heart attack and triple bypass surgery. I know that this sort of thing runs in my family, and being 19 years old I figure that now is as good a time to start being healthier as any. I am really interested in Yoga, as I have heard alot about how good for you it is, and I'm starting a vegetarian diet. I don't have time to take a class because I'm in college, but do you think you could point me in the direction of a good book or give some other advice to help me in my "self-improvement?"

Thank You.
-Michael

Dear Michael,

There are so many good books out there. Certainly you can browse the [Yoyoga Bookstore](#) for ideas. I would also recommend reading a book by one of the founders of the main Yoga centers in the United States: Sivananda, Iyengar, Rama, Satchidananda, Kriyananda, Yogananda, Beyondananda (the last one does not have a yoga center, per say, but he is one of my favorite authors. I suggest first reading books by one of the first six authors. And then definitely including Beyondananda to further spice up your reading.)

Are there not any yoga classes at your college? I teach at a college and yoga is offered as Physical Education credit. I teach the philosophy and the postures in the classes, however, many yoga classes simply teach the postures. So complement your posture studies by increasing your understanding of yoga as a lifestyle approach through one of the well known authors I mentioned.

maste,
n

Where art thou, Teacher?

Dear Joan,

I have a recurring yoga injury. I have somehow pulled the muscle that attaches my hamstring to my gluteus. I feel quite sure that I am doing some pose wrong but not really sure how to correct it. Any ideas on what I'm doing wrong or how to alleviate it?

Thanks!
Tina
Atlanta, GA

Dear Tina,

This is a question for the yoga teacher you study with. I can not answer it via email and without seeing your practice. If you do not have a yoga teacher, take at least one private lesson with an experienced yoga teacher who can examine what you are physically doing in your practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Overweight and Ouchie

Dear Joan,

About a year ago, I suffered a severe back injury. The doctor's cannot explain what happened to me, nor have any of drugs and/or physical therapy they have subscribed had any affect on relieving my pain. About sixmonths ago, I began practicing yoga daily (as opposed to the occasional approach I had previously had). Lo and behold, the pain began togradually melt away. Finally, I had something that could help me, and I was ecstatic.

Several months have passed now, and I'm still relatively pain free for the first time in a year. Thus, there are two reasons for my writing to you now. The first is that I am constantly in search of new asanas to practice to strengthen my mid-lower back. The second is that I am about 50pounds heavier than I would like to be. Although I am gradually losing some of the weight that I have accumulated during my time of injury, I am experiencing an incredible frustration at not being able to sink as deep into some postures due to my "gut."

Any suggestions you could offer would be very much appreciated!!

Namaste,
Overweight and Ouchie

Dear Overweight and Ouchie,

The large "Gut" can bring on back pain, so you are wise to want to work to reduce this. A large percentage of our society over 40 has back problems, and a large percentage of our society increases the "gut" size as we age as well.

First of all, I commend you for "gradually losing some of the weight." Let this time of extra weight help you increase your sensitivity to life. Do not hurry to loose the pounds. This will throw your body/mind even more off balance. The extra weight was a balancing mechanism your body/mind used to deal with the pain you were experiencing. Our bodies are always looking for ways to find balance through difficult times. Thank your body/mind for helping you through this difficult time to the "pain free" existence you are now experiencing.

For specific help on the upper back, I would recommend BKS Iyengar's new book in the Yoyoga Bookstore, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health." Also, I would recommend "Relax and Renew" by Judith Lasater, Ph.d. These books, along with the wonderful yoga teacher you are studying with, will help you continue on this beautiful healing path you are on.

--
maste,
in

Mama Mia

Dear Joan,

I am expecting my first child at the end of September and I've heard that yoga is a great way to prepare for childbirth. I am looking for a prenatal yoga class in the western suburbs - I live in Brookfield. I don't practice yoga currently so the class would need to be on a beginner level. Any suggestions?

Thanks in advance for your help!
Melissa

Dear Melissa,

ll your local hospital. I have looked but I do not know of any specific classes locally in this. I know new classes are popping up all the time. I recommend studying with a nurse or an seasoned and experienced yoga teacher. Many blessings on your pregnancy.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Number One Son

Dear Joan,

I wondered if you could offer some advice, my father has rheumatoid arthritis that affects his thigh muscles, are there any stretches he could do to relieve the stiffness in his legs?

Thanks as ever,
Darren

Hi Darren,

A regular daily yoga practice has wonderful medicinal effects for arthritis. The important ingredient to the dosage is the daily application. Just as we are required to take pills on a regular basis, so should be the study of the yoga postures be a regular daily dosage to improve our health. Movement with proper joint alignment will aid your father with his condition. Yoga encourages continual awareness to avoid injuries. I highly recommend a gentle, consistent, breath orientated, hatha yoga practice for your father.

Standing poses are particularly beneficial for the hips. The warrior poses help by building strength in the buttocks, hips, and thigh muscles. I have demonstrated Warrior Three as the asana for the week in this Yoyoga issue. This is the most advanced Warrior pose and may be too difficult for your father at this point. As he develops in Warrior One and Warrior Two, he will most likely be able to eventually work also with Warrior Three. The previous two issues of Yoyoga demonstrated Warriors One and Two.

To begin his daily practice, have your father start with some simple joint movements. A simple forward bend (Elephant), a simple back bend (cobra), a simple side stretch to each side (triangle), a simple twist (prone spinal twist). Hold each position for at least a few slow, deep breaths every day. After the body is warmed up, do Warrior One Pose and Warrior Two Pose for at least a few breaths each. Hold one side of body for a few breaths in pose, and then the other side of body. After completing the practice, relax in Shavasana. See if your father can practice this on a daily basis for one month. After one month of consistent daily practice, your father will most likely be finding significant improvement in his hips. Do write back to me and let me know of his progress, Darren. All very best wishes to you and your dad.

Namaste,
Joan

World Yoga Day

Dear Joan,

I started an event about 4 years ago called "World Tai Chi Day." It began as one event in Kansas City and then spread like a global wildfire and this year was celebrated in 80 countries, and has received congrat notes or official proclamations from the UN World Health Organization, the Governors of California, Connecticut, South Carolina, and Illinois, and from mayors worldwide. We have since expanded it to include qigong, and is now World Tai Chi & Qigong Day, per the request of the National Qigong Association, the American Qigong Association, and the World Qigong Federation. This year we will meet with the Director of the Hong Kong Martial Arts Association and the Deputy Director of All Sports for the People's Republic of China, to expand this celebration throughout China.

My point here, is that a miracle has occurred. I've realized this thing is much bigger than Tai Chi. The world is hungry for alternatives, but the media's only answer is DRUGS DRUGS and more drugs, for every solution. So, how do we inform the masses worldwide of alternative health therapies like, Yoga, TM, Biofeedback, Tai Chi & Qigong, etc.? Billions are essentially ignorant of them in any meaningful way, and even more ignorant of the massive medical research being done on them and proving their profound benefits for most common health problems people face.

... creating a mass media event each year called "World Healing Day." On this day, there will be many self healing and personal empowerment days celebrated. In this way, no one has to endorse anyone else (avoiding bureaucratic entanglements) while we all feed off the power of each other. In other words, on this day we would celebrate "World Yoga Day" "World TM Day" "World Native American Healing Day" "World Massage Therapy Day" "World Tai Chi & Qigong Day"

What I'm asking of you, is that you begin floating this idea in the Yoga world, to everyone you can (and yoga publications), and ask them to float it to everyone, every organization and association they can think of. This guerilla organizing is how World Tai Chi & Qigong Day was organized. And past events have included 1,300 people doing Tai Chi in downtown Los Angeles, as 1,000 did Tai Chi in downtown Hong Kong, 500 in Bucharest Romania, 500 in Buenos Aires Argentina, 500 in Sao Paulo Brazil, 600 in Tel Aviv Israel, Moscow, Paris, Johannesburg, Sydney, Toronto, Honolulu, etc. etc. in hundreds of events in 80 countries this year. Miracles are possible. (anyone can contact me through www.worldtaichiday.org)

Take Care Joan,
Bill Douglas, CIG to Tai Chi & Qigong author,
Founder of World Tai Chi & Qigong Day

ir Bill,

Bravo Bill! Miracles certainly are possible! Yoyoga readers take note, take heart, take heed, and take care.

**Namaste,
Joan**

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This summer, Joan is teaching yoga locally for preschoolers at the Oak Brook Montessori School and Westmont Montessori School. She is also teaching some yoga/massage seminars for conferences, including for the DeMello Spirituality Conference in Louisiana and the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund. More yoga and meditation classes with Joan will be starting in the Fall. The new class listing will be posted here in August.

Joan is taking statistics this summer at University of Illinois...she needs some time off...and a tutor.

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



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



2 in 1

Dear Joan,

I purchased your 2001 edition of Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga and am deeply appreciative that it is out! It answered so many of my oddball questions, the kind that don't get covered in other books, and explained yoga poses so clearly. However, I do have two questions.



On page 215, "A Yoga Minute" discusses hypothyroidism next to the Kurmasana, the Tortoise pose. This raises a concern. I have a form of hyperthyroidism known as Grave's disease (overactive thyroid) which is controlled by medication. You indicated that some poses, including Kurmasana, massage the thyroid. Would it not be contraindicated in my case? I don't have a yoga-savvy endocrinologist so I can't ask him. Should I avoid poses that massage the thyroid? If so, what poses are they?

--Joan's responses are in bold--

— I think this is a medical question for your individual situation. Shoulderstand also massages the thyroid. Show the poses to your doctor and ask what she or he thinks. Tortoise pose is quite an advanced pose, so if you are able to do it fully, it does massage the thyroid. Also, take note of how you feel after doing the pose. The last part of every pose is reflection. This is a very important part of the therapeutic aspect of the poses. Notice the effects the poses have on your body by laying back in shavasana or sitting in seated meditation between each posture. If you are not able to bend forward in the full extent of the tortoise pose, than I would not be concerned about over massaging the thyroid. The same with shoulderstand, if your back is arched and your body is not in direct right angle to your chin, I would not be concerned about over massaging the thyroid. However, hatha yoga is a study of balance. After doing any pose, it is important to do a counterpose to balance the effects of the pose. Fish or Camel pose are wonderful counter poses for tortoise or shoulderstand. If the poses are done in moderation, non-competitively, with full awareness, and with the final part of the pose being that of reflection, I honestly do not believe there would ever be overstimulation.

2. I have arthritis at the base of my neck on the right side. This makes for extremely tight neck/shoulder muscles (several chiropractors have expressed astonishment at the tightness...it's the kind you can bounce a quarter off of) extending to my shoulder blades. Being a beginner, do you have any yoga suggestions that would help me to loosen those muscles? I can't look over my shoulders, only parallel to them, and a lot of the yoga poses, especially the trikonasana, cause pain afterward.

Do not twist neck to look up in trikonasana. Try table pose with arms outstretched against a wall with feet flat. Feet standing a few feet away from wall. Cow pose also very good for shoulder/neck releases. Also check out "Yoga For Holistic Health" book by BKS Iyengar in [Yoyoga Bookstore](#), for ever more ideas. Remember too, Sue, that yoga is a lifestyle approach. Postures alone do not a healthy body make. There are many dimensions to our physical body. Might you also be holding the weight of the world on your shoulders? Could you lessen your load some by sharing more of the heavy load? It is a fine thing to do this. We are all in this together, to help each other. How is your sense of self? Over confident or under confident? These imbalances can also manifest in our shoulders. Doing physical postures alone rarely gets to the root of a problem. These are just some thoughts for you to reflect on as you continue on your yoga -union- practice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and blessed be!

Cordially,
Sue

---I have all the time in the world. You are most welcome, Sue. Yes! Blessed be to thee!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Let's make a deal!

Dear Joan,

Thanks for Yoga for Idiots! It has opened up a path for me far different than just "increasing flexibility", which is why I took my first yoga class 6 months ago. Your book has led me to all kinds of enlightenment, including chakra balancing. Self-actualization is a wonderful journey, and I embrace it compassionately.

On a side note, good luck with stats at U of I. I'm a U of I graduate (M.S. '87) and a math major at that. I was hoping to take a yoga class from you on a trip to the windy city this summer. Maybe I'll just have to be a guest speaker in your stats class, and barter tutoring for asanas!

Namaste,

Debra

Dear Debra,

it sounds like a good deal to me, Debra!

**Namaste,
Joan**

In search of a temple

Dear Joan,

Hello! I found your site via google.com and I was thrilled to find it. After 13 years, I am moving back to my hometown Chicago (well, actually Elmhurst) and I need some help in finding a good yoga studio.

I have been studying Hatha yoga off and on for the past 5 years and I love it. The type of studio I go to is simple, has a wonderful semi-shag rug and also focuses on meditation. This place has been heaven sent and I would love to have its twin somewhere near my new home.

Can you tell me of such a place? I don't mind driving out of my way, especially on a Saturday morning.

Sincerely,
Maureen

Dear Maureen,

The Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago may be just what you are looking for. Check them out on the web at <http://www.yogakriya.org>. Many people travel much farther than Elmhurst to take classes here. When you find a more local location, Maureen, would you please tell me about it, because I would like to study there or possibly even teach there too. When I was starting out teaching, I taught in a little studio with a little waterfall and shag carpeting. I felt blessed by the presence of a couple of students. The building was soon bought by an insurance company. Is there anyone reading this out there who has a wonderful new yoga location idea? I am on the road again and open to local new places and ideas for yoga classes and would love to hear about them. I plan to teach some classes this Fall at the York Center Park District. I taught there last Fall, in an outdoor wooden Gazebo along a beautiful pond, amidst the hummingbirds,

ducks and cranes. It was quite different than the place you are describing, Maureen, but it was/is quite a sacred place indeed. I am sure you will find a place soon to continue your studies. Maybe not an identical twin place, but a place very special to study yoga in. Where the temple of the space meets the temple of your body, housing the temple of your soul.

Namaste,

1

The Wonders of Walking...

Dear Joan,

I live in Bolingbrook, IL, and I want to find a place to take regular yoga classes. I signed up for your class at COD, but I had to get there an hour early to walk from a mile away! I bought your book, but I really need to have some direction this early on to correct my positions. Right now I am taking a once a week class at my park district, which is good, but I really want more! I'm just too far from the big city to go regularly. Got any suggestions??

Thanks!
Robin

r Robin,

For body positioning, I would recommend an Iyengar class. This type of yoga teaching focuses very specifically on body alignment in postures. There are various teachers in the area who teach the Iyengar style. Check out the Yoga Chicago Newspaper on the web at <http://www.yogachicago.com> for a teacher directory. "Yoga Among Friends" yoga studio in Downers Grove offers Iyengar classes, and the Metra Train from Bollingbrook is just one short block away!

**Namaste,
Joan**

United Kingdom come

r Joan,

I've taken up yoga recently and am reading "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" (2nd edition) - a wonderfully inspiring book! While I'll be away for a long holiday this summer, I'd like to continue practicing yoga and am looking for suitable audio tapes. Believe it or not, I haven't found any on Amazon.com and they don't seem to have them in Europe. Your selection of tapes looks just what I'm after but do you take orders from Europe and ship stuff over? The order form on your website doesn't allow me to change the country box from USA to something else (in my case United Kingdom) so I preferred to check with you first. If you take orders from Europe, can I pay by Visa? I'm ly looking forward to hearing from you and hope you can help me.

Many thanks.
Yours sincerely,
Karen

Dear Karen,

I have shipped tape orders to Canada, Hong Kong, Thailand, Sweden, Vietnam, Norway, England, Denmark, Brazil, to name a few countries...even Chicago! I accept Master Card and Visa. Just fill in the order form, and please allow \$3 additional to s/h calculations for out of country deliveries. Thank you, Karen!

**Namaste,
.Joan**

My brother

Dear Joan,

Hope this finds you well. I was in one of your Yoga classes at COD several years ago. I just wanted to say Hi and let you know that you introduced me to a wonderful part of life. Upon graduating from COD, I transferred to Illinois State University where I continued to study Yoga, Tai Chi, and teach Judo. I obtained my Teaching certificate and began using Yoga in my Judo classes, just as my instructor did. I graduated with my B.S. in Psychology in the winter of 99 & moved out to Phoenix the following spring. There I taught at Paradise Valley Community college, mainly a stressrelief & relaxation class. I was also fortunate to study Ashtanga with a wonderful man in the area. Now I am living in North Carolina, working on a business with one of my brothers, planning to open our own studio in January. I am currently teaching at a few of the local YMCAs. I just wanted to thank you for sharing your wisdom years ago, and to let you know that you are still an inspiration in both my personal practice, and in teaching. Have fun with your statistics class - they get easier as you go along (I had to take a total of 5 in my studies) the first one is always a bear! Thanks so much !!!

Namaste,
Mike

Dear Mike,

Thank you kindly for sharing your beautiful journey with me, Mike. Your journey is an inspiration to many, certainly to me, and I feel quite blessed to think our paths crossed along the way to Phoenix. I am forever a student, so do not be surprised if I show up in the back of one of your classes one day too. I say in the back, because I am shy..and your letter is humbling. Thank you, most sincerely.

At the time you were in my classes, my brother was dying, my parents were quite ill, and it was a very difficult time in my life. The few classes I taught, brought me solace and encouraged me by seeing the brilliance coming from my students. For those reading now who are feeling discouraged or depressed, or going through difficult times, reach out today to someone of any age. Make this day significant for someone else, because it will also be significant for you - if not immediately, eventually...as Mike demonstrates so beautifully for me/us today. Thank you, my loving brother. Om.

Namaste,
Joan

Pregnant with possibilities

Dear Joan,

Hi Joan! Do you have any advice for getting back in shape after pregnancy? What yoga asanas are recommended? This is for someone who has taken very little yoga, but is very active in other ways. This pregnancy has taken its toll on her, and she is desperate to get back in shape after the baby is born. Any advice is welcome!

Heather

Dear Heather,

I would recommend gentle yoga classes to get back in shape, gradually increasing intensity of practice.

There is no rush. Patience. Desperation does not a happy yogini make. Perhaps it is best to work the desperation off at a gym and come to yoga for balance. Soon there will be less need for the gym and more room for yoga. We always need to practice balance. The winds are constantly changing.

**Namaste,
Joan**

The Hunt has begun

Dear Joan,

I am interested in getting into yoga, mainly for fitness reasons and my own personal spiritualness. I live in Oak Park and really want to attend a class that could help me learn and grow in this area. This is a new undertaking for me so I'm trying to find a good place to begin, especially in terms of fitness. While I am relatively fit, I have no flexibility and I am searching for ways to blend fitness with spirituality and meditation. If you can offer any information, that would be great.

Thanks.
e

Dear Mike,

I would highly recommend studying with William Hunt of Oak Park Yoga, phone 708-445-0392. He is one of my teachers. He was the Technical Editor for our CIG to Yoga books. He is an experienced and extraordinary teacher who can effectively guide you in all the areas you mention.

**Namaste,
Joan**

See you, in September

Dear Joan,

I have visited your website and am very interested in yoga. I know you will be gone for the summer, but I was wondering if you knew of any yoga centers where I could begin to take classes immediately until you return and post yours in August. Do you have any suggested places to go? I live in Elmhurst and am looking for somewhere close, if possible, also somewhere with walk-ins welcome. I hope to speak with you soon. Good luck this summer!

Thanks
Erin!

Dear Erin,

"Yoga Among Friends" in Downers Grove is a yoga studio that has classes seven days a week at all different times, phone 630-960-5488. An assortment of different styles and teachers. Classes are on a drop in basis or you can buy a series of classes. I look forward to seeing you in the Fall!

Namaste,
Joan

Tricky

Dear Joan,

Can you please tell me what foods are that are the closest to their original form. I'm not that keen on veggies so maybe you can help me. A few examples would do nicely.

cheers
Al

Dear Al,

Is this a trick question? More carrots will get your eyesight keener for veggies. More ginger will open up your tastebuds and improve your digestions. Also, apples, oranges....

Namaste,

Joan

Balance

Dear Joan,

I was hoping that you could recommend an Ashtanga yoga class or instructor in the Elmhurst area. I have been doing weight training and aerobic workouts for the last 7 years. I've dropped 10 dress sizes and I've lost, and more importantly, kept off 50 extra pounds. However, I've recently become so bored with working out at the health club that I have avoided working out, like the plague. I've been taking Pilate's and Hatha yoga classes at my health club, instead. However, that is all of the variety that they offer and I wanted something that was more physically challenging and more mentally stimulating. From your experience, is Ashtanga yoga a good direction for me to head? I want to stay in shape, after all of my hard work over the last 7 years. If not, what is your recommendation? Please keep in mind that I do want to find classes close to home, so that they are more convenient and therefore, more doable. Thank you for your help with this matter, Joan! Be well! Be balanced! Be happy!

Connie

Dear Connie,

Now there are classes all around now in "Power Yoga." The College of DuPage offers classes in this, as well as many health clubs and park districts, etc. Ashtanga means 8 limbs. Check out the [Yoga Philosophy](#) section of this site to see what these 8 limbs are. However, I do know that most people in the US refer to Ashtanga as a Power Yoga work-out. So, check the College of DuPage Quarterly updates for these classes, phone 858-2800. Happy non-violent hunting!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yoga as Therapy

Dear Joan,

I am interested in being a yoga therapist. I am at present a student with 4 years experience. I was wondering if you have any advice as to training programs available. I live north of Chicago. Thank you for your time.

Bridget

Dear Bridget,

There are various ways to approach yoga as therapy. Many people think in terms of the physical postures, and certainly that is a wonderful place to start. Gabrielle Halpern of the Yoga Circle in Chicago offers classes in rehabilitation yoga. His website is <http://yogacircle.com/>. These are gentle yoga classes that work with specific postures for specific physical ailments. Many people come to Gabrielle who have serious ailments and find the postures relieving of pain and building of strength and stamina. It is beautiful what he teaches and he accepts apprentices to study with him.

Many people think in terms of meditation as therapy. Learning to work effectively with the mind is certainly a wonderful place to start. There are various places to study meditation. This month the Cennacle Retreat Center in Warrenville is having a weekend retreat on Christian and Zen Meditation. Their phone number is 630-393-1231 or 800-240-6702. A Buddhist Monk and a Christian Monk will be leading the retreat. I have spent numerous retreats at the Cennacle and have truly enjoyed them. This one sounds particularly wonderful, and I would most certainly be there if I were not already booked to go to a Liturgical Harp Conference at Notre Dame University. If you are interested in this harp conference call Lyon and Healy at 800-621-3881.

Many people think in terms of scripture as therapy. Learning the deep meaning of sacred texts and incorporating the profound beauty of the meanings into one's life is certainly a wonderful place to start. The Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago has various programs and study groups that encourage this path of study. Studying with others can certainly make this path all the more fun and enriching.

As I see, Bridget, there are many ways to approach yoga as therapy. And there is not one path that is allusive. Which path carries the key to deeper, fuller, health? I hope I have given you some options in three possible paths above...and there are yet more.

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.

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.



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



Fond o' Bandha

Dear Joan,

I have difficulty practicing bandhas. I attempt to do them simultaneously in a sitting position. Is this the correct way? Are they done only one at a time? Please help.



r ?

Bandha's are defined as "locks." These are difficult concepts to comprehend from a western perspective of understanding reality through physical definitions. Bandhas are energy locks. Can you feel energy pulsating within you? Can you feel in what part of the body the energy is focused at any given time? Can you feel subtle shifts in the energy with various body movements? When we become more aware of these subtle movements of energy, then we are on the road to beginning to work with bandhas.

There are three main bandhas. They are jalandhara bandha located in the chin region of the physical body, mula bandha located in the rectum of the physical body, and uddiyanan bandha located in the pelvic region of the physical body. Energy permeates within and around our body, so defining these bandhas within the limited capacities of our physical body is not adequate. It does though give us a frame of reference in working with and releasing the vibrant energy that is within and around us.

Bandhas can be worked with sitting, standing, or in a yoga pose. The first step though is to become more adept at the subtle shifts of energy within the body. Take a class in energy. Take a Reiki Class - a form of energy massage, or a Hatha Yoga class like Kundalini which puts an emphasis on breathwork and energy concepts. Take a Reflexology class which focuses on reflex points in the feet and hands that energetically correspond to different parts of the body. Continue working with, feeling, sensing the subtle shifts of energy from various perspectives. The answers you are seeking are subtle. They can not be defined in a simple stroke of my keyboard. The answers lie in the depth of your experience. "Last night I

asked an old wise man to tell me all the secrets of the universe. He murmured slowly in my ear, 'this can not be told, but only learned.' " - Rumi

--
aste,
l

Night and day, you are the one...

Dear Joan,

I hope you and all in the U.S. are well. I have recently begun a new job and unfortunately I have less time for yoga. This means that I get up earlier in order to perform my postures and meditation. I have noticed that I cannot stretch as far as I can when I perform yoga in the evenings, will I still get the same benefit?

I also purchased the two books by Swami Rama you recommended to learn more about Pranayama, I have read the first volume (Which was very interesting, thanks for informing me of it!!) and it has answered many questions and enabled me to practice more effectively. But do the exercises have to be done in the order they are written, e.g. 3 months of kapalabhati then 3 months of Nadi shodhana....., or can you perform more than one type at each sitting?

Thank you as ever
Darren
U.K.

Dear Darren,

Great to hear from you again! The book you are referring to, "Path of Fire and Light," was written by a Hatha Yoga Master who devoted every waking hour to the study of hatha yoga (probably every sleeping hour too). This is much more than most of us can do. In order to become a master of yoga to the level that Swami Rama was, where he could control the rate of his heart beat, could control his brain wave patterns, could enter deep periods of meditation effortlessly, an hour of practice a day is not enough This is not to say that an hour or even less a day is not beneficial to one's health, rather I am referring to what it takes to be a master. If one wants to master anything, yoga, music, non-violence, one must devote their lives to their practices. People such as Rama (yoga), Mozart (music), Gandhi (non-violence), all became great because there was no separation between what they devoted their lives to and the rest of their day.

So. in answer to your question, an hour of alternate nostril breathing every day for three months,

followed by various other yoga practices and postures of which Swami Rama recommends in his book, is not possible for most of us to do in our daily lives. Even if it is possible, its most likely not practical when we have bills to pay, food to prepare, families to take care of, schools to attend, etc. "Path of Fire and Light" is meant to give you inspiration in the possibilities from someone who had decades of study and first hand experiences. The length of time you practice the techniques will depend on the time available to you. Even one minute of practice can offer deep benefits if done with full awareness. One can certainly me more aware in one minute, possibly even one second, but one can not become a master in this unt of time.

Regarding the first part of your question about morning practice verses evening practice, different times of day our energy levels are different, as well as the limberness of our bodies. I regularly practice hatha yoga, yet some mornings when I get up I can barely touch my knees, let alone my toes. In the evening, my hands often go effortlessly to my toes (not always though;). Perhaps a little in the morning and a little in the evening would be helpful for you. It is for me. The morning humbles me and the evening feeds my ego which brings me back to more humbleness in the morning. If you find that you prefer practicing in the evening because it is feeding your ego, then I suggest you reevaluate your practice. That's what I do. Are you studying this purely for the physical or for deeper understandings of your true nature? When my ego comes into play in the evening, I am reminded of the essence of my practice. An essence I often find an easier awareness of in the morning. And so, morning, afternoon, evening are all good times to study yoga.

Namaste,
Joan

the right vein...

Dear Joan,

I have been doing yoga for 10 years but now I am experiencing and thinking about varicose veins and what poses will help me. I just feel aches from time to time in the back of my legs. My job is sitting all day for 10 hours and before this I was standing on my feet for 10 - 15 hours a day. I do change positions from sitting now about every 10 minutes and get into various yoga poses. Just to give you a little background, I am very active at body sculpting, body building, and of course my yoga sessions. I am a vegetarian, so I get fresh foods daily and have a clean diet. Is there any suggestions for poses to do while at my desk and then poses to do when I get home to relieve my body of the fatigue of sitting all day? I do by the way do the wall pose to reverse the flow of blood.

Thanks in advance!
Kai

ur Kai,

Great that you do the wall pose of legs up against a wall as you are lying on your back on the floor. This is very good for varicose veins and also for male or female reproductive problems. Another pose to try is Butterfly Pose - seated on the floor with soles of feet touching, knees coming out to side. Place pillows under your knees so that you can relax into the pose and bring your back against the wall. This pose is also helpful for sciatica. One more pose suggestion, shoulderstand. If it is difficult for you to bring your head up as you lie on your back with hands supporting your back, then use a chair for support. Let your head rest on the chair and your arms hold the back of the seat of the chair. Legs straight up in the air. A low under your shoulders might increase the comfort too. Those are three suggestions for you...three times the charm!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Eyeing Iyengar...

Dear Joan,

I came across your website in B.K.S. Iyengar's new book, "Yoga, the path to holistic health" and i was hoping you may be able to give me some advise.

I am a sufferer of TMJ disorder (Temporal Mandibular Joint). I have had signs of TMJ since a very young age, but it didn't start affecting my life until I was in high school. Now I'm 22 and about 4 months ago it took a turn for the worse. It is now so painful that I am experimenting many different treatments to try to control my pain, knowing that this is something that I will have to deal with the rest of my life. I've gone through physical therapy and I am trying to go on to see a TMJ specialist. But unfortunately my health insurance only covers \$2500 lifetime. So I am trying to seek out other types of therapies that may control my pain. My Mother introduced me to Yoga. Being new to it herself we are now learning together. I am interested in maybe joining one of your classes but I saw that right now you only have weekday classes, which I am not able to do. So I was wondering if you may be able to recommend some asanas that would be good for relaxing the shoulder and neck muscles (which are always tight and contributed to my TMJ pain) and also if there are any that are more specific to the jaw joint area. I'm not sure if there is such a thing.

If you could respond I would appreciate it greatly.

Kimberly
St. Charles, IL

Dear Kimberly,

I get many letters regarding TMJ. You are not alone in your pain. I am sorry to hear of your pain and I hope you will be finding some relief for it, perhaps through some of my suggestions today. Some of these suggestions you may have already explored, but here goes:

Do you have a mouth guard to sleep with at night? Its a soft retainer that is placed in the mouth to keep the teeth from grinding at night. Many people grind their teeth at night and are not even aware of it. We work out so many tensions in our dreams! Your dentist can fit you with a guard made especially for your mouth, and which, unfortunately, costs at least a few hundred dollars.

e your mother and you are exploring this together, spend some time each day massaging around mother's shoulder blades (scapulas). Gently move the shoulder blades around with your hands. Not movements, gentle, subtle movements. Massage deeply around the rims of the blades where various muscles attach for the neck and shoulders. Tensions around the shoulder blades can cause tensions in the jaw.

Massage your feet. The reflex points for the feet and your jaw, are in the toes. Take your hand around your toes and rotate the toes slowly around a few times a day. Since our feet are often confined in tight shoes, they rarely get this type of movement. How are your shoes by the way? Are they really tight? Get good shoes. Shoes that are supportive yet give your toes some freedom.

Yoga poses - cow pose (demonstrated as asana of the week), Downward Dog, Upward dog, and Sun Salutations -all are great asanas to help loosen up the upper parts of the body. Do these movements slowly and with awareness. I repeat, do these movements slowly and with awareness.

And, do write me back and let me know how you are doing, Kimberly. I do care.

**Namaste,
Joan**

New classes are here!

Dear Joan,

Can you recommend any yoga facilities that may be close to my home. I live in Algonquin, IL & that is a far northwest suburb of Chicago, IL. I would gladly travel to Chicago or Oak Brook but my current schedule does not allow enough time for it. thank you so very much for your help

Namaste,
Ken

Dear Ken,

I recommend Bruce Symonds of Lincolnshire Yoga who teaches in the Northern Suburbs. His website is: [Lincolnshire Yoga](#)

**aste,
Joan**

Yoga Community

Dear Joan,

I recently moved to Elmhurst from the city and am desperately searching for a yoga community to become involved in. I was practicing ashtanga and lotus/hatha flow at Global Yoga in Chicago. I am interested in finding out when you will be offering classes and if you are teaching ashtanga/power yoga at all.

I love your website, information, and bio. I look forward to hearing from you and continuing my journey of yoga discovery through yoyoga. Thank you for your information.

erely,

Dear Liz,

I do not teach power yoga. I did once, but it is just not me or reflective of my daily practice. There are wonderful power yoga teachers out there. Trisha Fiske teaches this at the College of Dupage. My new classes are listed in my class page at : <http://www.yoyoga.com/classes.html>

Keep in mind, my classes combine discussions on the yoga philosophy along with gentle explorations of the postures. Just as I take time to do this website, I take time to teach yoga too. I teach it as a synthesis of life experience. The physical postures are one part of a fuller study of bodymind awareness. My focus in teaching is to develop the bodymind awareness.

Also, contact Yoga Among Friends in Downers Grove for local yoga community events at 630-960-5488.

maste,

Joan

South Africa...

Dear Joan,

I have only started reading your book *The complete idiots guide to yoga* (2nd edition). I have never done yoga before, but would love to do so. I live in South Africa and would love to get hold of some of your tapes and Videos as I prefer to do things on my own than in a class. Are you able to get my orders to me in South Africa and how does it all work?.

When you talk about the tapes for swedish massage or foot massage - do I have to have any kind of experience or a medical background? Please let me know and you may have details of who I could contact in South Africa. I live in Kwa-Zulu Natal, SA.

Thank you,
Regards
Jackie

Mr Jackie,

I certainly am able to send to South Africa. I ship anywhere and everywhere. I only ask that people ordering from outside the US add an additional \$5.00 to the total shipping order. The tapes are written for everyone, whether or not you have a medical background. Thank you for writing to me, Jackie. I hope to be hearing from you again soon.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Do you have a question for Joan?



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



New Scottish Yoga Studio Opening Soon!



Dear Joan,

I have just bought your book 'The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga' and looking forward to getting into it. I have been practicing Yoga and am so touched by the practice and philosophy that I would like to set up a centre in Edinburgh, Scotland. I was wondering if you had any tips or advise on how to start and operate a centre and indeed if you have any contacts with people who run their own practice. I wish you well in all of your interests and in spreading the awareness in the spiritual paths for people.

With kind regards,
Lorna
Edinburgh

Dear Lorna

I do not run a center, Lorna, so I am not one to really offer you that advice. But I do encourage you on this path because I am getting many letters from Scotland and I know the interest in yoga is very much there. Read on of Tracie's letter below. Maybe you both can plan to meet soon for some yogi tea?

**Namaste,
Joan**

Connecting

Joan,

I FELT I MUST WRITE TO YOU AND TELL YOU HOW GREAT I FOUND YOUR BOOK 'THE COMPLETE IDIOTS GUIDE TO YOGA.' I ONLY BEGAN YOGA ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO AFTER A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND AT THE TIME I THOUGHT I WOULD NEVER SMILE AGAIN LET ALONE ENJOY LIFE LIKE I DO AGAIN TODAY AND ITS ALL DOWN TO YOGA!!! AFTER READING YOUR BOOK I DECIDED THAT I WOULD LIKE TO TEACH YOGA IF ONLY TO HELP PEOPLE LIKE IT HELPED ME AT A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT I HAD NOTHING TO LIVE FOR. I COMPLETED AN 18 MONTH COURSE IN HATHA YOGA WHICH I NOW TEACH TWO CLASSES A WEEK IN MY LOCAL VILLAGE IN SCOTLAND ~ UNFORTUNATELY DUE TO MY WORK COMMITMENTS THAT IS ALL I CAN DO ~ ALTHOUGH I PRACTICE DAILY. MY CLASSES ARE A FUN WAY TO LEARN YOGA AND I HAVE 80 KEEN STUDENTS ~ I AM GOING TO RECOMMEND THAT THEY ALL BUY YOUR BOOK.

I JUST WANTED TO SAY JOAN THANK YOU FOR SUCH A GREAT, FUN BOOK ON YOGA IT WAS A LOVELY BOOK TO READ AFTER SOME OF THE MORE 'SERIOUS' BOOKS I HAD TO STUDY DURING MY COURSE AND IT IS THE BOOK I USE IN MY CLASS ~ I AM OFF NOW TO READ YOUR WEBSITE. HAVE A NICE DAY : O)

--- MASTE,
ACIE

Dear Tracie,

Thank you so much for your inspiring letter, Tracie. Would you please contact Loma at lorna.pellet@tesco.net. And Loma would you please contact Tracie at Traciesf@aol.com. It is a joy to expand friendships among yoginis.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Awesome Australia

Dear Joan,

My name is Peta. I am 19 and I live in Australia. Recently I was in one of the local book stores, looking for a book on financial advice. (I was thinking that maybe if I could improve my monetry situation, my problems would disappear.) Instead I left the book store carring what I now consider to be the best investment I have ever made.

complete IDIOTS guide to Yoga" the second edition, has changed my outlook completly. I now realise that roblem was not with my finances. But with the way I looked at living. With the advice I found in the pages of your book, I have started to turn my life around. I find myself happier, healthier (not only a healthier body but a healthier more alert mind), more intune with my WHOLE being and I find that the people around me are picking up on my positive outlook too. Three of my friends have gone out and bought themselves a copy of your book and they are beginning to receive the benifits that yoga brings in to one's life.

Now our only dilema is finding an instructor willing to teach four eager students. So far we have had no luck. The teachers we have found have either been not qualified, far too over priced or the classes have been too large. I was wondering if you new of any contacts in Australia, of Yoga instructors for Townsville Queensland. It would be greatly appriciated. Thank you so much again to you and Eve Adamson, for your wonderfully inspirational book. I would most definately still be in bookstores today searching for a quick fix to my problems, in the finance section. Rather then learnign through Yoga to tune in to my body and mind to fix things internally so that I can gain a fresh non-violent outlook on things.

Sincerely Yours,
Peta
Townsville, AUSTRALIA

ur Peta,

I took out my trustie Yoga International Directory for teachers and found several yoga centers in Australia. I am not sure where they are in relation to you, for it's a big country, but perhaps they can put you in touch with teachers in your area. Here are some Australian email contacts for you.

**ashtanga@bigpond.com
yogagya@amail.com.au
course@yogamagik.com**

Thank you for your most kind words as well. Follow your pure heart, Peta, and the money will follow...

**Namaste,
Joan**

^Many paths in one study

Dear Joan,

I recently took a yoga class offered at a local YMCA. I thought yoga was supposed to be relaxing, but I was in tremendous pain! Was this instructor going too fast? Am I THAT out-of-shape? Am I expecting too much from myself? Is there such a thing as "beginner's yoga" ? I am interested in learning the poses, but I don't want to hurt myself. Any ideas will be appreciated.

Thanks,
Alex

Dear Alex,

When I first started studying yoga, about twenty years ago, the classes all seemed to have soft lights, soft music, carpeting, candles, and gentle approaches to the yoga poses. Now when I enter a yoga class

the temperature may be over 100 degrees inside (Bikram), belts, blankets, and blocks may be scattered around the room (Iyengar), loud pulsating music could be playing (Jivamukti), deep breathing and strenuous movements (Power, Ashtanga) or deep breathing with gentle movements prevail (Kundalini). When gentle joint rotations predominate (Himalayan), soothing Sanskrit mantras resonate (Sivananda, Kriyananda, Yogananda), the list goes on...

I imagine you are starting to get the picture, Alex, of the vast variety of approaches to the study of yoga. Today, there are many yoga styles available to study; however, the word "style" is not always appropriate because some of these "styles" come from a lineage of teachers spanning over hundreds of years. In this case, the teachings are called a "tradition." The Himalayan Yoga approach is an example of a yoga tradition. Bikram Yoga is an example of a "style" for it is named after the man "Bikram," who is the director of a well known yoga school in Los Angeles, the "Yoga College of India." Each style or tradition includes the unique twist of the person currently instructing as well.

So, in answer to your questions: Yes, yoga can be relaxing. The instructor obviously was going too fast for you, but may have not been going fast enough for someone else in the class. You may be out of shape for the approach you were studying, or it may simply have not been the right style for you. You are not expecting too much from yoga. There is such a thing as "beginner's yoga." Speak to the instructor of the class before you attend it. Tell the instructor what you are looking for. If he/she does not teach what you are looking for, ask for a referral of a teacher in your area who does. If you are looking for relaxation, say so. Hey, I see nothing wrong with candles, carpeting, soft lights, soft music, and yoga. In fact, that sounds perfect to me!



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



It's all about Eve

Dear Joan,

I just read the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga. I had been taking yoga classes for about a year when I decided to get more into the whole idea of it. Your book seemed like the perfect start. It turned out I really was "seeking the spiritual with new vigor as an answer to a world we can't control" (p. 57) in the wake of the terrorist attacks on Sept 11. Now I am reading The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation and plan to get The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage when I'm finished. You and Eve Adamson did a terrific job! Thanks. I'd like to tell her also but I didn't see a way to contact her in the books.



Sincerely, Janet

Dear Janet

Eve's email is: eve_adamson@yahoo.com. Although she regularly checks this site, I am sure she would be mighty happy hearing from you personally too. Thank you, Janet.

Namaste,
Joan

Saturday nite is right

Dear Joan,

Joan- I got your web address from the Life Newspaper. A good friend of mine and myself have been talking seriously about taking a yoga class together to help relieve some of the stress in our lives. This stress has greatly increased in the last week, of course, with all that has happened to our great nation. We are both 49 years old, work full time and try to manage a household at home while trying not to go crazy over all the demands and chores that pile up. We live in Downers Grove and Westmont. Morning classes are out because of our jobs. Any chance you may be thinking about having a Saturday class in the suburbs?

Thank you for your time-
Kathie

Dear Kathie,

Sorry, Kathie. I already am teaching Saturdays at Columbia College in Chicago. Check out "Yoga Among Friends" in Downers Grove at 630-960-5488 for an assortment of classes offered over the weekends.

Joan,
Joan

Tea Time

Dear Joan,

I have been having trouble keeping up with yoga. Big trouble. after i suffered a shoulder injury, i couldn't practice for 2 weeks. after that it's slipped away from me. having a teacher and certain times when i meet with him/ her would help me. do you know any good instructors around the swarthmore/ springfield PA area? also, i'm not sure which teas would help me relax best. could you suggest some?

Thank you,
Jonathan

Dear Jonathan,

Herbal teas of chamomile, rosemary, and lavender are herbs of a group referred to as antispasmodics or relaxants. There is a wonderful little book on this I would recommend reading called, "On Tea and Healthy Living," by Penelope Sach. In it you will find explanations of the history and healing properties of various teas. As far as teachers in your area go, I suggest you refer this question to the Himalayan Institute located in Honesdale, PA. Their email is himalaya@himalayaninstitute.org. Best wishes!

**Namaste,
Joan**

Hugs

Dear Joan,

Beautifully said, Joan. I thought about you and your yoyoga pages when all this happened because I knew people would start blaming and want retaliation and a few years ago I might have been with them, but today I feel a sadness in that we are all one and that revenge is not the answer. I wish everyone could feel what is in our hearts.

Thank you for your message. I feel hugged!

Dear Lori,

You are hugged again.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Om

Dear Joan,

I have been reading your column for awhile. I know I have to get my act together. I am out of shape, depressed, unmotivated. Needless to say, the recent events in our country haven't helped much either. I got a lot of anger in me. I don't really know how to get rid of it. I seem to snap at people for the littlest things. Your column is something different, and kinda gets me out of myself a little. I don't really have a question. I know what I have to do - pep up, get in shape, change my attitude, blah, blah, blah.

Dear friend,

These certainly are stressful times. For many of us, the national events have compounded many stresses that have already been overloading within us. It sounds like you are recognizing the stresses within you and see them also as separate from the national tragedy. This is very good. This shows that you are aware. Now, the next step is to take constructive action upon your awareness. And that, as you state so well, can be quite difficult to do.

I understand stress. I have a lot of it in my life too. With all the regular massages I receive, and all the yoga and meditation I do and teach, you would think I would have a regular handle on it all. Still, sometimes the stresses do get the best of me. When I find myself over reacting emotionally to something or someone, I try to remove myself from the situation, if even for a few breaths. If that does not work, then I try to physically remove myself from the situation for at least a few minutes. In that time, I run or do some deep stretching. I do something that engages my body so that my emotions can have more room to untangle. When feeling down, I move around. When feeling great, I meditate.

So watch my thoughts. I try to release the negative self talk that can easily creep into the corner of mind and quickly bulldoze the whole mindset. I release this negative self talk by first observing it. Only through awareness of its existence can I start to change it. I observe it as I would observe a sunset. I see this negative self talk as a movement through me, but not as "me."

However, the main point I would like to make, my friend, is that you are not alone. I join you in your struggles. I encourage you to take a class in yoga, meditation, massage, feldenkrais, aromatherapy, reiki, or any class that is involved with the healing arts. You may very well find me sitting in the class learning right alongside you! And along the way, as we continue to openly express our concerns, we will assuredly find more people joining us in our struggles toward a more peaceful existence. Together, we can create bridges to ease our travels through these difficult times. I hope you will continue to reach out. Thank you most sincerely for writing to me.

Namaste,
Joan

Dear Joan,

Thank you for taking the time to put such powerful words together for all of us to enjoy and say OM in agreement.

aste,

Lani

Dear Lani,

Om.

**Namaste,
Joan**

VIP

Dear Joan,

I greatly enjoy your web site and your Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga books. I recently added yoga to my insight meditation practice (vipassana - buddhist tradition) and notice that they seem to complement each other greatly. In many cases they appear to be striving for the same things: mindfulness, awareness, clarity of mind, peacefulness, etc. What are your thoughts on this combination?

Namaste,
Dan

Dear Dan,

Yoga compliments many religions. Yoga is not a religion. Vipassana, although practiced through buddhism, can also be studied apart from Buddhism and separately from religious affiliations. Vipassana meditation is taught in many places around the globe. It is also taught in prisons and has considerable success there as well. As far as my thoughts on the combination,of yoga and vipassana, I think it is a iderful combination. After all, hatha yoga leads one into a meditation practice.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Pillow talk

Dear Joan,

I am beginning to practice meditation along with my regular yoga practice and I'm curious if you have found any particular vendors of meditation cushions that you prefer. Please share any on line references, since shopping from Alaska can be most easily done that way.

Thanks in advance, and
Namaste,
Lani

Dear Lani,

I simply place a small pillow under my tailbone. It helps me to sit comfortably longer. I do not have any special requirements for the pillow. I have seen meditation pillows filled with a sand like substance that seems to make adjusting on it easier, however, I have never really used one. I just have a basic little pillow, no special requirements or costs.

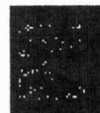
**Namaste,
Joan**

the know...

Yoyoga with Joan

Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

Yo Joan



From Europe...

Dear Joan,

Thank you for putting words to the feelings of horror, despair, disbelief and loss so many people around the world (Americans but non Americans too) have had since the tragedy of a few weeks ago. I am sure it has helped many of us, making us feeling we're sharing and that we are united together in this - thanks for giving a voice to the

and confusion of so many of us. I'm saying this as a non American and, believe me, we here in Europe are with you in thoughts.

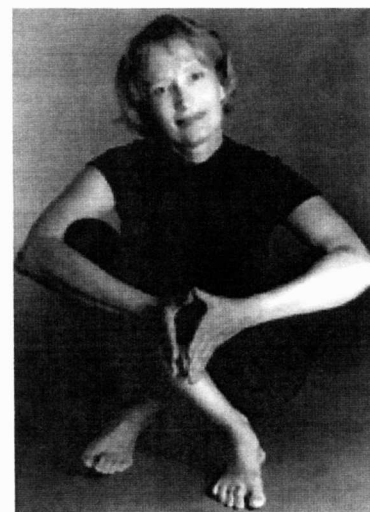
It was lovely to receive the October Yoyoga issue shortly after that and, as usual, I much enjoyed it. Keep up the good work!

Karen

Dear Karen

Karen

With the continuation of bloodshed and horror that is imparted now by American hands in the Mideast, the pain and confusion continues. It is certainly evident that breaking the bonds of karma is a very difficult process. It is so much easier to simply follow karma - blow for blow.



**Namaste,
Joan**

Of Mantra Mind

Dear Joan,

Hope you are well and that things are getting back to some semblance in the U.S.

I was wondering, if meditation is a time for repeating a mantra, how do you meditate on a specific subject e.g. death, suffering etc. I need to understand how to generate some more faith in God or an afterlife, but it's tricky being a scientist. sometimes it's impossible to take a leap of faith, without good evidence!! When i try mantra meditation, am i supposed to say the mantra out loud, or in my head? and how slowly are you supposed to breathe?

Best wishes to the American people, Lets hope that out of a tragedy the world can become a more cooperative and loving place.

Darren

Dear Darren,

Mantra is a technique used in meditation. Mantra is the repetition of words or sounds to uncover a more peaceful state of existence. There are many mantras used in yoga. They are usually in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the written text of many of the ancient sacred writings of India. Since yoga has its roots in India, sanskrit mantras are popular in yoga classes. A popular yoga mantra is "Om Shanti." This means - all peace. The sanskrit language is said to encourage deeper energetic awareness within the body. It is considered a sacred language. That is why "om shanti" is more often used rather than "all peace." Also, "all" is not a direct translation of "om." Om encompasses all that exists. One word can not really define it. It is an energetic principle and sound. The energies of this life, this universe and beyond, reverberates around and within om.

Mantras can be said out loud with the full resonance of one's body or silently within the depths of one's soul. When trying a mantra, breathe with awareness. Relax your body and let your voice and/or heart wrap around the sound. Try this now with the simple sound of a long 'e.' Take a deep breath and exhale 'eeeeeeee.' Then silence. Close your eyes. Listen to how your body responds to the sound. Try this again silently. Take a deep breath and silently....eeeeeeee. Silence. Listen.

As tragedy continues daily in the mideast and around the globe, I too hope and pray that the world can become a more loving place.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Cold Heat

Dear Joan,

I hope you don't mind me taking the liberty of asking you a question. I have a friend who has a strange illness (I forget what its called) where she gets a rash and her body heats up and she has been advised not to eat any foods that are heaty - no spices, or even cooked food (!) and do yoga asanas that are cooling or can cool the head and get out the heat from her body. I don't know what exactly to advise her to do (I have asked someone else about a diet that might help) and I was wondering if you know which yoga postures help the body to cool down. She has learnt the Sun Salutation from me but it gets her all heated up so I need to find alternative postures for her to do. I would be glad of any advice.

Thanks and best
Priya

Dear Priya,

Have your friend contact an Aryurvedic Practitioner. This is a form of medical study in India that is becoming more popular in America. It includes studying the doshas and physical make-up of an individual and determining a specific life style that would be most suited for the person. Diet, exercise, etc., are all studied. A vegetarian diet is advised, but this is a process that is worked through and does not involve sudden shifts in behavior.

Various conditions can cause overheating of the body. It could be related to circulation, or to the immune system, or digestive or cardiac. Almost any system of the body can cause changes in the temperature of the body, so I would need to know more specifically what the problem is before I could recommend a possible asana. However, here is a sample pranayama technique to help cool the body. It is called Shitali breath. Purse the lips and curl the tongue slightly out of your mout. Inhale through the curled tongue as if you were sipping air through a straw. Then bring the tongue into the mouth and close the mouth for a few seconds, holding the breath. Then, let the breath exhale slowly through the nose. This is a gentle yoga cooling breath.

**Namaste,
Joan**

To jump or not to jump, that is the question.

Dear Joan,

I have finished reading and rereading Idiot's Guide to Meditation. I really enjoyed the book and feel inspired to make meditation part of my daily life. I especially appreciate your unbiased look at all of the world's meditation traditions and philosophies.

I do have a practical question. You offer many techniques and often say something to the effect of "do this when you need... or do this when you feel..." However, once we become more established practitioner, is it advisable to select one or two techniques and only practice them or is it O.K. to use different techniques whenever. I wasn't sure if "jumping around" caused one to be less proficient, so to speak.

Thanks again to you and Eve Adamson for a wonderful book.

Karyn

Dear Karyn,

By studying different cultures we begin to see that there are many paths in meditation. Regarding following one path, this is the advised way to become an established practitioner. People are constantly writing to ask me questions about Tai Chi or Reiki or an assortment of various bodywork modalities. Although I have taken courses or studied quite a few, many I have simply glanced at. The study of yoga, and the process of meditation that hatha leads to, is where I have devoted my heart for quite a few years now. If I kept jumping around without a central focus, I would not have this site for you to write to. On the other hand, my sincere interest and belief that there are many paths to the discovery of self-awareness, helps me in being less judgemental.

In final answer to your question, it is perfectly all right to "jump around" exploring and discovering new techniques in meditation. When you find a path that feels right...make it your home for awhile and see what happens. Where you lay your heart, is your home.

Namaste,
Joan

Dear Joan,

Computer problems have kept me off-line for -it seems like- months and tonight I went back to connect with your website and was deeply moved by your poignant piece reflecting on the horrific events in the US. You are spot on as always. Your words echoed my sentiments (and those of others I am sure) exactly but I could never have expressed it so touchingly. Thank you so much Joan.

Also, On reading Peta's letter, I got out my trusty International Yoga Teachers Association Full Members book and have the following information for her to follow up on.

Leigh Cole, Cranbrook, Townsville. She might also like to check out our Association web page. <http://www.iyta.org.au> for information.

Namaste,
Margo Hutchison
Bodywise Yoga & Health
Brisbane
Queensland
Australia

Dear Margo,

Thank you, Margo. As always, you are a wealth of encouragement and information. Many blessings to you and Bodywise Yoga & Health in Australia.

**Namaste,
Joan**

College Bound

Dear Joan,

Love your book, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga.

I just started teaching a yoga class at our local college, and selected your book as the text. It is a fun read, has all the pertinent information and great for beginning yoga students. The students have enough hard core textbooks to read and thought your lighthearted approach is perfect. At the beginning of the semester most of them responded that they had chosen yoga for stress release, so you know where they are coming from in this hectic life of ours.

I have your first edition and the college bookstore ordered the latest, second edition, so that is what my students are reading. I heard that as an instructor that I should be able to get a free copy from the publisher? Could you give me information regarding this?

I enjoyed your web site, you are certainly accomplished with many talents! I too am a Nationally Certified Massage Therapist. The two disciplines integrate well, don't they. It is such a gift to be able to share healing in both of these modalities and there is always more to learn.

Good Luck in all your endeavors!

Namaste,
Kyle
Montana

Dear Kyle,

Thank you for your wonderful letter. I have put you in touch with our publisher. I do not know about the free copy deal...but then again, I am only an 'expert,' so there is so much I do not know about! Best wishes with your classes and I am thrilled that your students are working with the CIG book. I agree with you that the disciplines of yoga and massage work very well together. I see yoga as a form of massage too - an internal massage. Thanks again!

**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.

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.



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Yo Joan
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Home

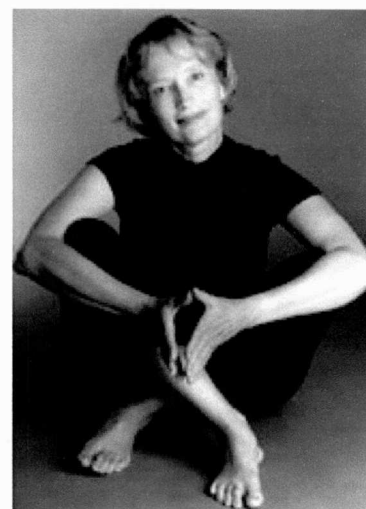
Yo Joan



2 for om

Dear Joan,

Thanks for keeping me updated on your latest website. Just wanted to let you know that I recently started a class in yoga that I like very much. The instructor is really good. She was unaware about your website, so I clued her in. Hopefully, she will visit it soon.



I also wanted to let you know that I liked your Idiot's Guide to Meditation so much that I got two copies; one for home and one for our cabin that we visit each weekend. I call the book my "second bible". I think, particularly in this time of tumult, that people could get some "inner direction and guidance" from this book. I know it has really helped me. Thank you. And keep those books coming!!

Shanti,
Jonna

Dear Jonna,

Thank you, and what a compliment that is!

Namaste,
Joan

A weighty subject

Dear Joan,

Hey Joan, Just dropping a line to say hello. I have ventured off the path of yoga and i have been bodybuilding. It's hard to do yoga and weights at the same time. What should I do give up the weights and become a full time Yogi? Can I have muscles with yoga?

Chris

Dear Chris,

You can do yoga and then you can do weight lifting...or you can do weightlifting and then you can do yoga....or you can do weightlifting with a yogi's mind. The two are not exclusive of each other. One look at a popular media Yogi named, "Rodney Yee," can help one see that muscles, and even 6 pac abs are possible with yoga. I question if yoga is what develops those 6 pac abs though. Yoga instead brings your body into balance. I would highly recommend adding yoga to your weightlifting life. I realize too, that bodybuilding is a competitive sport, so approaching this particular type of weightlifting with a yogi's mind may be quite difficult, if not impossible. So for now, Chris, I would recommend approaching yoga as part of the picture, not yet the whole picture.

Namaste,
Joan

Sweet dreams

Dear Joan,

Is there a method whereby the need for sleep can be decreased? I have heard that high beings like Ammachi and

Lama Zopa Rinpoche can get along well on 2-4 hours of sleep per night. Obviously one must build up to that, but have you any suggestions?

Thanks,
a

Dear Maria,

It is not the quantity of your sleep, but the quality of your sleep. If your sleep is clear of trouble, your mind is restful, guided by beautiful dreams and thoughts, then the quality of your sleep is excellent and less sleep is needed. Meditation can help you improve your sleep. The people you refer to in your letter are considered meditation masters.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Her Hernia

Dear Joan,

Have you heard of any asanas or other natural healing methods for healing a hernia? I have a hernia and my doctor recommends surgery. However, I have noticed that my hernia only bothers me when I am NOT consistent with my yoga practice . . . for example, when I was on a threeweek vacation. Most of the time, I maintain a daily yoga practice, and my hernia rarely bothers me at all. Realizing that yoga seem to keep it in check, and with a true belief that the body can heal itself given the right conditions, I have declined surgery, hoping to find a non-medical way to heal it. I plan to begin practicing chi gong in an attempt also heal. Would massage of that area help as well? I appreciate any ideas you may have, as I do not want to have surgery!

Thank you and Namaste'
Heather
Las Vegas, Nevada

Dear Heather,

Hernias are activity related injuries. It is where a portion of an organ protrudes through an opening in a muscle. It often occurs in the abdominal region after too much weight was lifted or too much pressure was applied. It is important to warm up slowly while doing any type of exercise to avoid these types of injuries. It is also important to listen closely to the body, something yoga is very good at helping us do.

Shoulderstands help to treat hernias. Shoulderstands reverse the gravitational pressure on the body and offers some freedom to organs in the abdominal region of the body. It is important to warm the body up through various yoga movements before attempting a shoulderstand. Shoulderstand is considered an advanced yoga pose and should only be practiced under proper guidance from an instructor. It takes strength in the abdominal region to lift up into shoulderstand, so you could actually do more harm to your hernia if this pose is not done correctly. Seek the guidance of a qualified yoga teacher to help you to mine appropriate poses for your particular body and condition. Your diet can also effect hernias. Be to drink plenty of water and eat healthy foods to nourish the muscles and keep them supple. Regular massages can prevent hernias, but once a hernia is diagnosed it is important to seek proper medical care to prevent the hernia from developing further.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Around the world...

Dear Joan,

I am a yogi in india. I like to know how you runs your school? What you know about yoga? How many student are there and what is there aim in life and yours? I think i can be helpful to you. Do you ever in himalaya mountain? Here lives lord siva, om nama sibaya.

Dear ?,

I do not have a school, though I teach at several public and private schools. Checking in to this website regularly will help you learn more of what I know about yoga. I have never been in a himalayan mountain, but I have experienced mountains of numerous dimensions here in America. I have found that Lord Shiva travels. My very best wishes to you. Our spellings differ because of English translations. Om nama shivaya.

**Namaste,
Joan**

Yogi Chair

Dear Joan,

I accidentally stumbled upon your site. My compliments for your site. It's very informative. I have a question. On one of your pages there's a picture of you upside down in what looks like some kind of head rest. I've had an accident some years ago, and the muscles in my neck are traumatized. I cannot relax them voluntarily. This head rest seems like the perfect thing to relax those muscles. Did you make it yourself, buy it somewhere?

Best,
Gert

Dear Gert,

Yes, in the bookstore of this yoyoga site, I am sitting in a chair, reading a book...upside down. I bought this little yoga chair twenty years ago. I have seen them offered for sale in various yoga magazines and by various makers. I don't even remember where I purchased it from because it was so many years ago. It is a little padded stool which has an open space in the center for your head and neck. Your shoulders rest comfortably on the padding of the little yoga chair. It is a very relaxing and safe way to do headstand. It takes all the pressure off of the neck. Of course, if headstand is done correctly, there is not too much pressure on the neck because it is a balanced pose; however, many of us are not balanced in headstand and would benefit greatly by this little yoga chair. I highly recommend it. It also makes going into headstand easier, for those of us who struggle with getting into this pose. I used this little yoga chair for many years before I was able to go up into headstand on my own. The chair gave me confidence and comfort in the pose. After regular use of this little yoga chair, I was able to eventually go up into headstand unassisted. I still do use this yoga chair quite regularly, though. After twenty years of regular use it is still in excellent shape.

Namaste,
Joan

Ever deepening...

Dear Joan,

How can I make my meditation more than relaxing. How can I deepen it?

Tom

Dear Tom,

Say a prayer before your meditation practice. Dedicate your meditation practice to this prayer. Keep this prayer consistent with each meditation practice. Watch as your practice deepens. If you can not think of a prayer that you would like to say every day in beginning your meditation practice, Sogyal Rinpoche offers this example of a prayer to use in his beautiful book, "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying."

**"By the power and truth of this practice:
May all beings have happiness, and the causes of happiness,
May all be free from sorrow, and the causes of sorrow;
May all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is sorrowless;
And may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment and too much aversion,
And live believing in the equality of all that lives."**

A beautiful prayer like this, said consistently before each meditation practice, can deepen the experience of your meditation, your insights, your life. May this blessed holiday season be filled with increasing love and light for you, dear Tom, for me, for all cherished readers of Yoyoga, Suburban LIFE, and all dear lives everywhere. AUM Shanti/All Peace.

**Yours in peace,
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.
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.**

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