



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



## Shin Splints

Dear Joan,

I read with interest your discussion regarding the thumb (last Yoyoga issue) . I was wondering if you know of a technique for reducing and preventing shin splints? My daughter who is a runner and teacher is constantly plagued by shin splints and cannot seem to resolve them.

I thank you so much,  
Donald

Dear Donald,

The main cause of shin splints is pronation of the foot. Pronation is a turning outward of the foot at the ankle. The tendency then is to walk on the inner border of the foot. This puts undo strain on the muscles of the legs. Tiny tears in the muscles begin to develop to compensate for the imbalances. Worn soles of shoes or poor construction of shoes can cause this condition. Excessive pounding, as in running on pavement, can also contribute. You mention that your daughter is a runner. Combine running with poor shoe construction and you have a strong foundation for shin splints. The only way to heal this condition is to stop the pounding on the pavement so that the tears in the musculature can heal. I know how difficult it is to tell a runner to stop running though.

Orthotics are often recommended for shin splints. This is a very good recommendation as it will start to balance the weight distribution while standing on the feet. Since hatha yoga is about bringing the physical body into a balanced state, a regular yoga practice can also help this condition. Tadasana is a good beginning point. Tadasana, or mountain pose, is an intimate study of how the body balances on the feet. Correcting imbalances through subtle and slight adjustments is what practicing this posture involves. This study can be done most effectively through the assistance of a qualified yoga teacher.

**Tadasana** is an important pose to base the foundation of your yoga practice on. Standing forward bends **Uttanasana** also help you to bring awareness into the knees that lift the muscles from the shins. These are the



**only standing poses I would recommend at this point until the leg musculature is more aligned. Next, I would recommend poses like Bridge and Bow to help develop the musculature of the legs. These poses do not involve the downward pressure of gravity on the legs that the other standing poses require. At the point of inflammation in shin splints, you want to relieve some gravitational pressure. Headstand, though an advanced pose, can also help to relieve some of the constant gravitational pressure on the feet. A yoga teacher can help guide you into all of these yoga postures in a way that is appropriate for your body.**

**So, wrapping it up, here are my suggestions:**

**Tadasana**

**Forward standing bends**

**Bridge pose**

**Bow pose**

**Headstand**

**As your body becomes acclimated to these poses, more can be included. I hope these suggestions you will find useful, Donald. I wish you and your daughter a new year of healed splints.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Teachers Union**

Dear Joan,

I have been practicing yoga on and off for a few years and I would like to ask some advice from you since we have a few things in common. My first yoga class was also at College of DuPage and right now I am an undergrad with a double major in anthropology and music here at Northern Illinois University. I really like to teach and help people but I have never taught yoga formally. I would like to get certified as a teacher and I have been looking around. Can you recommend any places with good summer programs preferably in Illinois but I am also willing to travel within the U.S.

Thank YOU,

Joe

Dear Joe,

**There are so many options now in teacher training programs. As my background states in the [About Joan](#) section of this site, my certification was from the Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago. They have various programs available there, and I highly recommend this organization. I've also studied through many other organizations, such as Sivananda and Self Realization. Both these organizations have certification programs in various locations around the country and abroad. You can also find website information on these organizations in the [About Joan](#) section. Since you have so many teacher training**

options available to you these days, I'd suggest you ask your current yoga teachers where they received their certifications from. Learn from all the teachers you have.

Namaste,  
Joan

## Anatomy of Hatha Yoga

Dear Joan,

I read in "Anatomy of Hatha Yoga" older men often develop a condition where the sacroiliac joint becomes ankylosed -form a complete or partial bony union. Are there yoga postures to help this condition or is it too extreme so that there is no help for the problem & therefore are there postures they should not do which may cause further difficulty & pain?

Darlene  
Minnetonka, Minn

Dear Darlene,

**Forward Dog, Butterfly, and assorted Spinal Twists help to increase flexibility to the sacral region (the lower spine). All of these poses should be practiced under the guidance of a qualified yoga teacher to assure that you are practicing them correctly. Once you understand the movements and the extension that is appropriate for your body, then bring these postures into your daily home practice. As we age, gravity, metabolic changes and reduced physical activity can cause an increase in weight. Generally, men tend to gain weight in the abdominal region. This can cause an undue strain in the lower back. Keeping your weight at a balanced level can also help structural imbalances in the sacral region.**

Namaste,  
Joan

## Area Classes

Dear Joan,

Good evening. I am writing to request information regarding yoga classes offered in the area of Oak Brook, Elmhurst, Villa Park. My brother and I are encouraging our mother to explore yoga as an alternate form of exercise, relaxation and stretching. We would like to share the positive experience we have had with her. Ideally, we would like to find a studio with both individual and group classes. Your suggestions as to locations within the western suburbs would be valued. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Peter

**r Peter,**

**There are just too many classes to mention here. Check out the Yoga Chicago Newspaper on the web or in local health food stores for the many listings of classes available in these areas.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Final knee-note**

Dear Joan,

I'm relatively new to yoga: I've been doing Pilates for almost a year and yoga every day for the past month. I love it, and I'm in for life! I've noticed that in postures such as the triangle and the gate, where I have my legs apart and straightened, I have a hard time finding the proper amount of tension in the knee of the extended leg(s). I want to have a long, solid, extended leg with a nice amount of tension in the hamstring, but I find I can only go in one of two ways: either my knee remains slightly bent or I am 'collapsing' into the knee, and that feels unsupported and unsafe. advice? Many thanks!

Rachael  
Corvallis, Oregon

**Dear Rachael,**

**My advice is to find an Iyengar teacher in your area to help you with this specific problem. I could give you general suggestions, but I always think it is best to work under the supervision of an instructor who can work with your particular nuances. Let me say though, that that it sounds like you may be overextending in Triangle Pose. You are bringing the upper body too far to the side. Only lean over to the degree that you can keep your legs straight. A different yoga pose called, Side angle, is a very good stretch that requires the knee to be bent. It also helps develop the knees. In this pose, you will be able to stretch to the side more fully. Remember that yoga is a gradual process. It is not the degree of your stretch, but the quality of your movement which permits the body to unite with the soul (yoga).**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

I am!"

---Anthony DeMello,  
'The Song of the Bird'



## Hatha Yoga Meditation for Stress Reduction, Peace, and Wellness.

**Joan Budilovsky teaches Hatha Yoga Meditation and Massage as forms of Stress Reduction. The benefit of Yoga, Yoga Meditation and Massage can be realized by anyone regardless of age or physical fitness. Joan wrote her very first yoga book, "Fat Free Yoga," in 1996.**

She wrote this simple yoga book for her beginning students to learn yoga, and now has over 19 yoga books, tapes and CD's on the market. Her simple yet informative style, makes it easy for anyone to learn yoga.

These avenues for stress reduction create a calm and peaceful mindbody, and this, in turn, creates a more calm and peaceful world.

Whether one is approaching yoga as a beginner or for advanced study, one needs a qualified teacher. Joan Budilovsky has been studying hatha yoga and yoga meditation for over twenty years. She serves on several college faculties and has also taught the benefit of yoga to preschoolers.

Joan Budilovsky has developed extensive curricula for numerous schools in hatha yoga meditation and massage. She teaches the benefit of yoga as stress reduction not only in schools, but also for many



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



## Heart Moves

Dear Joan,

Hi. I've been diagnosed with "atrial fibrillation." Heart problems in plain English... Do you know if there is any yoga one can do despite it? Of course I understand that it's not so wise doing challenging and upside down asanas - and I won't, but I'm still allowed to move my body :)

L.

Dear L,

**Atrial fibrillation is the irregular beating of the heart. Certainly, you can still move the body, and this is a very good thing to do! I would recommend slow movements that don't overtax the body. Athletic heart monitors do not register irregular beats well, so wearing one will not be of much value to you. However, getting to know your body better, learning to understand and read its intimate signs will be of great value to you. This is why yoga is excellent for you.**

**According to BKS Iyengar's new book, "Yoga the path to Holistic Health," Downward Facing Dog is a pose that stabilizes blood pressure and heart rate. It's not necessary to hold the pose long at first. In time, you'll find it easier to hold it longer. This pose strengthens the heart and improves circulation. I wouldn't recommend full inversions such as headstand and shoulderstand for you because they can put too much pressure on the heart. Yet, downward dog is a partial inversion that, with regular practice, can bring about many, if not all, of the benefits that a full inversion can. The key is a steady practice. Keep me posted on how your heart is doing as you continue to move and groove to the yoga beat.**

--  
aste,



# Mommy Yogi

r Joan,

I have someone who asked me about taking yoga when she is pregnant. It seems as though MANY poses are contraindicated (I love that word). Any thoughts on teaching pregnant women?

Janet

Dear Janet,

**I've taught many women right up to delivery! The women I've taught up to delivery were very physically fit. We even did sun salutations and we adjusted the arms around the belly when bending forward. We didn't hold any of the poses long. Instead of Cobra, we did Warrior 1. We did not do spinal twists. We laid on our sides during Savasana, the back is too uncomfortable to lie on while fully pregnant.**

**To me, most of it's common sense. If yoga is taught in a loving and slow practice, anyone of any condition can do it. Of course, I wouldn't recommend Ashtanga for pregnant women, but I wouldn't recommend ashtanga for tense, overworked people either. Why wouldn't a baby prosper in an environment of movements of love, acceptance and freedom? This is yoga.**

**I understand there are many pregnancy videos out with very specific ways of teaching yoga for pregnancy. I consider my students "self taught."**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## Another hearty question

Dear Joan,

I have a friend who recently started doing yoga with me. I've been practicing for about 3 years, but I am not a qualified teacher. Before we started I asked her if she had any health issues and she told me she had poor circulation due to mitral valve prolapse - a heart condition that her cardiologist has told her is very minor in her case. She is becoming interested in inversions, but I have advised her to hold off for now until I find out more. I've read about both benefits and precautions for sirsasana (headstand) and sarvangasana (shoulderstand) for people with heart problems. Her doctor has told her she should be fine, but to seek a second opinion from a qualified teacher.

On her behalf, I'd like to know your opinion of the effects and possible precautions of those postures on someone with heart and circulation problems. Of course, I understand there are issues of liability, so I'd like to reiterate that I am giving the information you provide as only informed opinion, and not advice, and will not hold you liable for any outcome.

Thank you for your time.

Namaste,  
Joan

**Dear Matthew,**

**I'm not worried about liabilities. My intentions are pure. I simply share my experience. Every person has the right to determine if something doesn't feel right or is not appropriate for their particular body. Even though certain postures may be recommended for heart conditions, some people may still chose to do poses that are not recommended. This is all personal choice. For example, I know someone who did headstands all the way through her pregnancy even though she was advised by her teachers not to. She delivered a very healthy and happy baby too.**

**But, back to your questions and concerns about your friend's heart problems. Mitral Valve Prolapse is not an uncommon condition. It effects about 20 percent of the population, a majority being women. The valves of the heart propel blood into the arteries of the body. When these valves don't function properly, they can cause circulation problems. Sometimes blood can slightly leak back into the heart causing a heart murmur that a doctor hears in a stethoscope. Even with this prolapse, the heart usually has enough blood to function properly, and this condition does not get worse over time.**

**I think you're wise to question your friend about her health problems and to be open and honest about your teaching abilities. As a friend, it certainly goes beyond liability issues, because you sincerely want your friend to be healthy and not in any danger. I want this for your friend too, and I want you, my friend, to be confident in your care and concerns. This Mitral Valve Prolapse condition, of itself, does not warrant special treatment in yoga postures. The concern would be if this condition created other retaliatory conditions. Some people have mitral valve prolapse their whole life and it doesn't effect their health in a negative way at all. Some people develop other heart conditions that would warrant special care. Let your friend continue to explore her yoga practice fully. I agree with your doctor that your friend should be fine.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?**

**Send your questions or mail to [Joan](#) .**

**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.**



thousands of miles over land,  
until it finally came to the sea.

It was fascinated by this strange  
moving mass, quite unlike  
anything it had ever seen before.

"Who are you?" said the salt doll  
to the sea.

The sea smilingly replied, "Come  
in and see."

So the doll waded in. The farther  
it walked into the sea the more it  
dissolved, until there was only  
very little of it left. Before that  
last bit dissolved, the doll  
exclaimed in wonder, "Now I  
know what I am!"

---Anthony DeMello,  
'The Song of the Bird'



## **Hatha Yoga Meditation for Stress Reduction, Peace, and Wellness.**

**Joan Budilovsky  
teaches Hatha Yoga  
Meditation and  
Massage as forms of**

These avenues for stress  
reduction create a calm and  
peaceful mindbody, and this,  
in turn, creates a more calm  
and peaceful world.



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



### One breath at a time

Dear Joan,

Wow! You sound like a very qualified yoga person. I am so glad I found you on the web. I am a 32-year-old female who has been diagnosed with dyspnea (shortness of breath). I have had it for nearly 6 years and the doctors cannot find any explanation for it - as you can guess I am near the end of my rope. They have offered no solutions or anything - just basically live with it. Well, I cannot and will not live with this breathing problem. It has affected my quality of life tremendously - because of this problem I have trouble breathing always, experience anxiety and have total loss of motivation and energy. I ordered your tape breathworks - what will this do and can you give me any more advice on which types of yoga I would benefit from as I have read that yoga decreases symptoms of dyspnea. Also, do you have other tapes that you would recommend? I would appreciate any advice that you would be willing to give to someone who suffers greatly from a breathing disorder. Also, when should I be expecting my tape to arrive? I just ordered it today - Feb. 9.



Thanks so much, Joan,  
Julie

Dear Julie,

**I hope by the time you read this; you've received your tape and are working with it. I understand the anxiety that accompanies breathing disorders. Ask anyone who has problems breathing; it can surely affect all parts of our physical body: heart rate, sweat glands, mental activity, etc.**

**A simple technique to help calm your nerves and breath is to exhale longer than you inhale. For example, if you inhale for two counts, exhale for four counts. This will start to calm the body. Once the body is calmed, other breathing exercises can be helpful, such as alternate nostril breathing: [Asana For The Month](#).**

**Yoga consists of eight limbs. It's a purification process for the entire being, body and soul. Look more**

**deeply into all aspects of the yoga study to help quell your anxiety. When we loose our breath, death becomes closer. The fear of death can increase anxiety. Perhaps the loss of breath is a veil to an even deeper fear? If we can lessen the fear of death, will the anxiety lessen? The Yamas and Niyamas of yoga help us to explore our lives, our death, and our daily life choices.**

**tape like breathworks can help to strengthen the breathing process. It strengthens the diaphragm and lungs and works progressively with lengthening inhales and exhales. This is how it helps on a physical level. It also includes mantra (the repetition of sacred sound) and savasana, the relaxation of the body. A regular practice of these techiques can calm and strengthen your body. A regular practice of the yoga Yamas can calm and strengthen your relationship to yourself and the world. I would encourage you to practice the tape everyday, along with deepening your practice of the Yamas in the choices made in daily life.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Accent on LOVE**

Dear Joan,

I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for doing what you do. I bought, **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga**, about a month ago and it has really opened my eyes to many new and wonderful things. Thank you.

As a completely unrelated note, how do you pronounce your last name? Is it Budda-luv-ski, Booty-love-ski?? When I meet people and tell them about your work and I tell them your name I am not quite sure how to pronounce it (I pronounce it the way I have it spelled the second way just because it gives me a reason to say booty. lol).

TJ

Dear TJ,

**It's so funny to receive this question just as I've gotten married! My husband's name is Ben Kuzniar. However, being the liberated yogini that I am, my name remains Budilovsky! There's various ways to pronounce this name. I prefer Buddha LOVE ski, with an accent on "LOVE."**

**Namaste,  
Buddha LOVE ski**

## **The weight's on your shoulders**

Dear Joan,

I have intermittent trouble with my hands falling asleep in Sarvangasana after about 3 minutes, which is preventing me from increasing my duration in the pose. I don't have great circulation in my hands to begin with. When this opens, they get tingly and nearly numb, although I usually come down before finding out if they will go totally numb. The interesting thing is that this doesn't ALWAYS happen, but it becomes something I fear will happen, so it always affects the pose. Am I pinching something? Thanks!

Kristine

**Dear Kristine,**

**You probably are pinching something. How about going for a shoulder and neck massage to find out which muscle it is? A qualified massage therapist will be able to pinpoint areas of muscle tension, and through appropriate pressure and massage techniques, can reduce muscle strain.**

**Also, do you use blankets when in sarvangasana (shoulderstand)? The blanket should be neatly folded under your shoulders so that your neck is resting off of it. Check out the book by BKS Iyengar, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health". In it you'll find pictures that fully demonstrate the position of the blanket for shoulderstand. A combination of massage and the use of a blanket in shoulderstand, will likely help to alleviate your problem.**

Namaste,  
Joan

## An Irish Song

Dear Joan,

I'm from Ireland and I'm reading one of your idiot guides to yoga, which I must say I'm enjoying immensely. I just had a question about singing seeing as you are a singer than you might understand. Are singing and yoga related, as in the breathing technique that's used?

Another thing is I find it hard to free my voice and find I'm unable to reach high notes as a result, could it be something to do with blocked energies? Would it help my singing if I started yoga and meditation? I used to be able to sing any note I wanted when I was younger and it seems, as I'm getting older it's become difficult for some reason! I'm also after finishing high school and have taken a year out to do different things and I thought in this year out I'd be clear on what course I want to take in college next year but I find I'm more confused than ever! Will I find the answer through meditation?

Very confused Fiona, 19

**Dear Fiona,**

**It's great that you're so open about your confusion. I want to encourage you to continue to be open so that your life experiences can help clear away confusions instead of compounding upon them.**

**Yoga helped me in my singing. It helped me by making it easier for me to express myself. It helped me in getting closer to the truer expression of my inner voice. Although my lips may have sung a song, my heart didn't always understand what I was singing. Yoga helped me to open my heart. It helped me to choose songs that reflected my heart more closely. It made me a better singer. It wasn't a matter of singing higher notes. It was a matter of singing with clearer understanding. I now sing from my heart. It's an ever-deepening soulful journey.**

**You may find some of your answers through meditation, Fiona, but you may even find more answers from experience. The first Yoga Sutra of Patanjali states, "Now is the exposition of yoga." If I give you a key to a house, but you don't know where the house is, the key won't be much use to you. So, continue to explore the house you live in. Continue to take hatha yoga classes, continue to meet new people, continue to explore all the many mansions of your being. You're in a beautiful time of discovery, Fiona. Don't withdraw - continue to experience with gusto!**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Massaje!**

Dear Joan,

My name is Maria. I read your book: "massage", I love it...it's lovely. I live in San Salvador, Central America. I have a question. I'm planning to go to the States, I've been taking courses as a massagist, and I practice massage in my country as a courier, so, I would like to know, If I can be a massagist in the United States. Please, I'll appreciate your answer.

God bless you.  
Love  
Maria

**Dear Maria,**

**Thank you for your kind letter, Maria. Yes, you can be a massage therapist in the United States. Many health clubs and athletic associations will welcome your expertise. There's no mandatory national license for massage therapists. Each state and county has different requirements. I'd advise you to call ahead to some health club businesses in the area where you'll be moving to in the states. Call these athletic clubs to find out what qualifications are needed to work as a massage therapist there. Don't be intimidated by some massage schools and organizations that may try to talk you into spending lots of money for their credentials. You may not need them. You already have acquired many credentials within your country. Take it one step at a time. If I can help you figure some of this out further, please don't hesitate to contact me again.**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



### Low back blues

Dear Joan,

I bought your book, (love it by the way), fairly recently and I have been implementing the poses. I'm a 28-year-old male. My problem is my lower back. It doesn't seem like it has an arch. Is this normal? I have seen yoga videos in which it seems the lower back almost right up to the butt itself has an arch. I don't have that at all. I was curious as to the possibility of it ever having an arch via yoga. Thanks ahead of time.



Dear Al,

**Yoga exercises (asanas) can help strengthen and flex the spine. A healthy and youthful body is connected to a healthy and youthful spine. In this way, it's not a matter of years that determines one's age, but rather the health of one's spine. There are also energy centers along the spine. These energy centers are called chakras. If the spine's not functioning properly, it can affect the way energy moves in the body. From chicken and egg theory, which do you suppose came first, the energy or the spine? As of today, do you know any spineless people? Do you know any people lacking energy?**

**Because of different body types, it's not always possible to see the full curve of the spine. Our musculature, our posture, or our extra cushioning (fat) can hide the curve. Looking in the mirror doesn't always give us a true picture. I have no doubt medical conditions exist of no curve in the lower back. The vast majority of us though, do have a curve there. Too much of a curve in the back, or too little a curve in the back can create a backache. Our bodies are incredible works of art. They are created with utmost balance. The curve in the spine absorbs much of the downward pressure the spine takes when we walk. For one thing, this curve literally protects the spine from breaking.**

**Yes, yoga can help you develop a stronger back. It can help you develop a stronger arch to your back as well. Not necessarily a larger arch, but an arch that supports the balance of your body. The study of hatha yoga is a study of balance. It's not a study in bodybuilding, or in weight reduction. It's not even a study in body ulpting. Yoga is a study of finding the appropriate balance to help your beautiful body function in the most ficient way.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Pressure off the heart**

Dear Joan,

Why do we roll to the right side to come up from final relaxation? Would this also apply to someone who is pregnant? Thank you for you time.

Edith

Dear Edith,

**The Heart is on the left side of the body. Resting on your right side takes pressure off the heart.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Boo Boo Bee do!**

Dear Joan,

Yo Yogi Joans and Boo Boo too...

Have you ever heard of the book "A Suckers Guide To Yoga", by Yogi Dewy? Cheatum and Howe? I recently purchased it for three easy payments of \$29.95. It's a really easy read... four pages and two of them are blank. Unfortunately I think I broke something doing the very first pose. Have you ever done the "Very Very Bad Dog Pose?" It was when I swatted myself with the rolled newspaper that I hurt myself. I don't think I should have used the New York Times Sunday paper! Is internal bleeding dangerous, if none of it spills on the floor? Should I continue and ignore the pain? Will a massage heal broken bones? Please let me know... and please HURRY!

Another question... A local mystic/homeless person said that I was born under a water sign. Is that the reason I'm afraid of drinking fountains? Got to wrap this up, the ambulance is here to pick me up... I'm looking forward to reading your reply. By the way, I'm not in your area, so are there any yoga classes near me?

Shasta...

Sardonicus  
Living Somewhere in the world

**ar Sardonicus,**

**With a ha-ha-ha,  
Yes,  
No,  
Maybe,  
...ybe,  
...and a ho-ho-ho!**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Missing something?**

Dear Joan,

First of all, I would like to thank yourself and Eve Adamson for your book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I bought it after Christmas and love it! Initially I bought it for some breathing/calming exercises that would help me as a mother of two small children; however, as well as this, it's helped me in many ways, and I find I miss it horribly when I don't have time or a chance to do it, even if it's only one day!

I did have one question I was hoping you could help me with: I enjoy doing the routines that you have set out in your book, especially the Sun Salutations first thing in the morning, and the Mild and Mindful etc. My problem is that even though I've read and tried most of the positions, I seem to do better by starting out with a pre-set routine. I feel as though I'm missing so many others, and wondered if there was anything you could recommend to help me? I'm currently taking a yoga class in my small town (which I was SO excited for!!) and it's helped a bit, but when I look at your book (which I readily keep at hand!), I'm sure I'm missing some wonderful moves, I just don't really know how to put them in a routine, as I don't want to put together positions that won't work well together.

Anyway, I've taken up enough of your time, so any advice or help you'd be able to offer would be wonderful! Thanking you in advance, and thank you again for putting such a great book out there! I'm telling everyone about it!

Tracey

**Dear Tracey,**

**Thank you for all the encouraging words. I would like to offer you a secret recipe of poses, but I know the best recipe for you would come from your current yoga teacher. As you stated, I arranged an assortment of Vinyasana in the back of the book (The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga). A Vinyasana is a combination of yoga poses. Many of the combinations in the book came out of my personal yoga practice. I think this is what you're referring to when you say you want to develop a yoga routine. The book includes only a sampling of possibilities to combining poses. The possibilities are vast because there are so many yoga poses to choose from.**

**When developing a Vinyasana, keep in mind the word, "balance." If you do a forward bend, you want to balance with a backward bend. If you twist to one side, you want to balance the twist to the other side. Try and use your eyes while holding some of the poses. Notice what your body's saying to you. Let go of outer expectations, and listen for direction from within. This is a personal practice. As your practice continues to develop, combine your inner direction with the directions from your teacher.**



**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Neti**

Dear Joan,

How's married life so far? Once again, I wish you and your husband the best of luck and happiness. My question is about the neti pot, which you've suggested me using in the past. I've been able to finally find a comfortable position to use the pot, however, each time I blow my nose after using it, some of the water gets into my ear cavity! Any suggestion on how to prevent this? Many thanks in advance for your help!

Namaste,  
Lulu

Dear Lulu,

**Slow your practice down. Neti pots are little pots created specifically for rinsing out the nasal passages. As you know, the nasal passages are delicate. Be gentle with the pot and the intensity of the water. The water should be warmed, but not hot. It should be of a light saline solution, but not too much salt. The key word again is, "balance."**

**Don't force the movement of the water either. For example, don't use the pot when you're rushing out to work in the morning or in a hurry before you go to sleep at night. Instead, take your time. Make the cleansing of your nostrils an act in devotion. It might be helpful for you to keep a journal as well. This may make you more aware of your emotions and the intensity of your approach to the neti pot, as well as other parts of life.**

**Try these suggestions, and then let me know how you're doing with the pot. And thank you, Lulu, for your continuing good wishes. All is well.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **OA**

Dear Joan,

I am reading the idiot's guide to yoga. I have just started into the practice of yoga and I am enjoying the feeling after a session. I have a problem with eating. I am not over weight, but I don't know when to quit stuffing my face. I am always over eating. I eat when I am not hungry. Sometimes to the point of discomfort. I have discipline in many other areas of my life. I am a scheduled person. I just can't get a grip on this one thing. Do you have any suggestions for me? Your help would be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your time.

Barbara

Dear Barbara,

It only do I understand your problem, I've been there. I used to have an eating problem just as you describe. My problem centered on bakery. I'd eat all the bakery in sight - even frozen!! It was back in the early 80's. I'd often eat alone. It sure wasn't joyful eating. It was cramming as much food in me as I possibly could. I was truly "stuffing my face." It was extremely unhealthy. Food consumed my thoughts and actions. It may sound funny to some people reading this, but when you're in this kind of problem, it's very distressing. I'd put it in the realm of a panic attack, but instead of the heart racing, the hand is racing to shovel food down the mouth. The study of yoga was just becoming a part of my life then. I can honestly say I'm over the eating problem now. The problem didn't go away overnight, but it did go away in the process of about two years.

During those two years, I went to several ashrams and learned about new ways of eating. I learned about eating in ways that didn't shock my digestive system. The foods at the ashrams were vegetarian. They were sattvic in nature - centered on balancing the mind, emotions, and body. I also joined an organization called, Overeaters Anonymous. It's based on Alcoholics Anonymous, but instead of alcohol being the addiction, food is. We're all food addicts in a way. We can't survive without it; however, many of us have unhealthy relationships with food. Since we can't cut food out of our life, the process of learning how to eat healthy foods is a very important one. OA led me into a deeper exploration of spirituality, which continued on for me into yoga .

During those difficult times, I was also in various women's support groups. I felt stifled in my ability to contribute in a male dominated society. Binge eating helped subdue my panic. The high sugars basically put me to sleep fast. High sugars gave my body a fast buzz initially, but quickly brought me into a crashing low. My diet wasn't balanced. One of the support groups I was a part of was centered on the book, "Fat is a Feminist Issue," by Susie Orbach. This book put my panic into perspective. The support group helped me realize I wasn't alone in my concerns, and that many of my concerns were well founded.

I realize this is quite a personal response, Barbara, but I know we're not alone. There are many people out there suffering with this type of eating problem. I hope some of these suggestions will be helpful. I want to also assure you there are more than Fritos and chocolate chip cookies at the end of the tunnel. The fullness experienced from over eating can be replaced by a fullness of spirit. That may sound Frito-lay corny, but I found yoga, in particular, to be a path that helped me tremendously in this journey. I have no regrets, because if my eating problems weren't as severe, I might not have explored for answers as deeply as I did. I wanted to solve the problem. I did. My hope is that you will too. Be patient. Be persistent in finding answers to the ever deeper and more fulfilling mysteries of this beautiful life we're in.

**Do you have a question for Joan?**

**Send your questions or mail to Joan .**

**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	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



### Singin' the Back Blues

Dear Joan,

Good morning, Joan. I have been doing the sun salutation for about a month now and feel that it invigorates my whole being. I love it. I repeat the motions 4 times. Recently I added another exercise/asana. I can't remember the name of it, but a person extends one leg, bends the other over the extended leg, twists to the extended side and places an elbow on the bent knee while twisting to the back. I hope I have described it correctly. My problem is that now my lower back hurts about two thirds of the way down my back and even to the touch. It didn't hurt when I did the exercise, only afterward. Do I continue to do it? I am not a flexible person. Even as a child I was not flexible. I could never sit in the lotus position. My knees won't go down without putting my left hip out. Do you have any suggestions to help with flexibility? I am 49 years of age. Is it possible to become flexible now at this late stage? Thank you for your time, Joan.



Barbara

**Dear Barbara,**

**It's possible to become more flexible at ANY age. The twisting pose you describe is simply called a spinal twist. A regular practice of this pose increases the flexibility of the spine. You're probably doing something wrong for it to hurt you. Perhaps you're twisting too far, or, perhaps your spine is not properly aligned when you twist. Since I can't tell what exactly the problem is without seeing you, I'd suggest a new way of doing the pose. Try this pose lying flat on the floor so that the floor supports your spine.**

**\*\*\*Begin the spinal twist by lying flat on your back with your spine straight. Bend your knees and place your feet on the floor. Your back remains straight on the floor.**

**\*Bring your palms together in front of your chest in a prayer like position called, "namaste." Straighten your arms out toward the sky, keeping your palms pressed together. Now, let your whole body**

**fall to the right, your knees and your arms fall to the right. Your arms should be extended out in front of your eyes.**

**\*\*\*Bring your left arm over to the other side of your body while keeping your knees facing right. Your arms form a "T" to your body. Look toward your left arm.**

**You're now in a spinal twist supported by the floor, aided by gravity. It's gentler on your spine and reduces the upright pressure. After you have rested here comfortably for a number of breaths, twist your knees to the left side and let your head look to the right. Rest here for several comfortable breaths.**

**If you find that your backache continues, check with your doctor. Not all poses are for every body. You may have just found one that is not right for you, or, you may have found one that is exactly right for you. You mention that the pain comes after practicing the pose and not during it. This leads me to think that you're twisting improperly. I hope my suggestions on alignment and a re-positioning of the pose to reduce the upright pressure on your spine will help.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?  
Send your questions or mail to Joan .**

**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 For The Month](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tip](#) | [Massage Tip](#) | [Yo Joan](#) | [Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#)  
[Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#) | [Seminars](#) | [Links](#) | [Archives](#) | [Home](#)**





Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



## Making out

Dear Joan,

Hi, my name is Clint. You are my favorite yoga author! When I first got your book I could hardly put it down. I was interested in the part speaking about enlightenment. I started vegetarianism the first time I learned it was wrong. You make yoga sound so much fun. I have one question; does chastity also involve not making out? I hope I hear from you soon.

God Bless,  
Clint

PS Have you ever heard of the practice of zhan zhaung? A lot of people claim it's more relaxing then yoga! I do disagree with them. One of there practices is called "standing like a tree" I don't fully know these practice's I was just interested in seeing if you know it. Thank You.

Dear Clint,

**I've never heard of zhan zhaung, so I can't help you on that one, but allow me to quote myself from our book to help you on your first question. I know this is odd to quote myself, but we have three editions of the book. I'm not sure which one you have. We get better with each new edition in getting a clearer definition of this Yoga Yama of Brahmacharya.**

**"Being virtuous means holding the opposite sex in high esteem and nurturing respect for someone you love. It also means holding "yourself" in high esteem and refusing to let your body be swayed by its every whim, desire, and want, whether that desire is for a person or for power or for a pound of Hershey's Kisses. Refusing to let your body be swayed by desire certainly doesn't preclude sex, a good promotion, or chocolate, for that matter. Instead, this Yama encourages the kind of restraint, and attitude toward those things we tend to desire that will help keep our minds clear and focused. Desire in itself is not negative. It is only when desire takes over as the driver of your life when you might run into trouble. oga helps to put you, the real you, back in the drivers' seat."**

**Although no particular mention is made to specifics such as "making out," in the yogic sense our minds**



are as important as our actions. As we beautify our minds, we're more open to giving and receiving love. There's no harm in loving another person. Contemplate your feelings for the other person. Contemplate their feelings for you. Know that you want the best for them and for you. Let these simple contemplations guide your actions.

Namaste,  
Joan

-----

## Yoga Family Style

Dear Joan,

I wonder if you know of any yoga summer retreat for children as well as adults. I would like to go on a retreat with my son who is six. We are both keen to do more yoga but any retreat I know of caters just for adults. Ideally I would love something in Europe but would be grateful for any information. Hope you can help and I look forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes,  
Mags  
naghadee in Northern Ireland

Dear Mags,

I know of yoga classes now being offered for parents with children, but I still don't know of specific retreats. However, I have attended several Sivananda Ashrams where children have attended. Recently, I stayed for several days at the Sivananda Ashram in Paradise Island, Bahamas. There were several families with children also staying there. It was always a joy to see the children playing and having fun at the ashram. They were well treated by all and brought a special joy to the environment that only children can do. They didn't attend the adult yoga classes, but they did have a lot of fun on the beach. There were some attendants who were willing to watch the children while the parents attended some of the classes as well. You would not be able to count on this though because many of the people come to the ashrams particularly for these classes. A letter to the ashram you'd be interested in attending might answer some of your questions better. The families that I met at the ashram were living in tents. The accommodations vary between tents, dorms, and single rooms. Each has varying prices as well.

I think an ashram experience would be really wonderful to introduce your child to. It's a place for peaceful contemplation within an environment of beauty and simplicity. There are no phones or televisions. It's a place of vegetarian diets, proper exercise, and wholesome living. There are many ashrams around the world. The ashrams I'm most experienced with are the Sivananda Ashrams at <http://www.sivananda.org>

**Namaste,  
Joan**

-----

## **Hola Sanskrit! Tak!**

Dear Joan,

I am reading the Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga and I notice that you use many Sanskrit names that I am not familiar with. I know the Yamas and Niyamas, and many others, but am very interested in learning more. Can you recommend a book to increase my Sanskrit? Is there a dictionary or the like available?

Thanks for your help.  
Nancy - from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

**Dear Nancy,**

**There are more and more people interested in learning this ancient sacred language of Sanskrit. Although my use of it is minimal, in our book, we tried to honor the origins of yoga by utilizing and giving pronunciations of many of the Sanskrit terms from which the study began. I did not have any formal study in Sanskrit. I learned many of the Sanskrit names of the postures through the classes I attended. Some hools of yoga use the Sanskrit terms of the postures exclusively. The Iyengar School of yoga training one school that does this. I have several of their audiotapes which help with pronunciation of the postures. Pronunciations can vary significantly though. India consists of many languages and dialects. Each teacher will bring into these pronunciations these accents. Coming from Canada, I'm sure you're well aware of the different sounds of varying dialects within your beautiful country. India has an intriguing reputation of a wide assortment of dialects and accents as well.**

**In addition to the knowledge of Sanskrit gained through experienced yoga teachers, there's also the American Sanskrit Institute. They have fantastic home study courses available. More information on this Institute is at: [www.americansanskrit.com](http://www.americansanskrit.com)**

**Shanti = Peace  
Namaste = Honoring the light within  
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?  
Send your questions or mail to [Joan](mailto:Joan) .  
Please include the city and state you are from.  
If your letter is directed for Suburban LIFE newspaper column, please state so in  
letter.**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



### Different strokes for different folks

Dear Joan,  
I'm confused about the different types of yoga. There seem to be so many, and it's hard to figure out which to study. How can they all be so different? I've gone to several different yoga classes and feel like I'm studying totally different things in each class. Could you help me figure this out?

Sincerely,  
Cheryl

Dear Cheryl,

I completely understand your confusion. I'd probably confuse you more by naming the many different approaches to yoga. Their Sanskrit names are even more confusing: karma yoga, bhakti yoga, ashtanga yoga, hatha yoga, etc.

Let's start with the word, "yoga." Yoga means, "to come together" or "yoking." Its spiritual application refers back to the ancient Indian literature of the Taittiriya-Upanishad of the second millennium BCE. Nowadays, when people refer to yoga, they usually refer to the physical postures. This most often comes under the study of "Hatha Yoga." Hatha Yoga involves liberation of the physical body. Through this liberation one develops deeper self-awareness. Even though some of the yoga postures may appear quite challenging and difficult, the study of Hatha Yoga is non-competitive. Liberation is ultimately an internal process.

In recent times, there have been a number of teachers who've created specific styles to the study of the postures. Although their styles may be unique and novel, their approaches fall under the study of Hatha Yoga. For example, "Bikram Yoga," "Iyengar Yoga" and "Forrest Yoga" refer to the yoga teachers. Mr. Bikram, Mr. Iyengar and Ms. Forrest all have created approaches to the study of the Hatha Yoga postures that have their individual stamp of personality and style. Every teacher brings to class his or her unique style. Even though your teacher may not be famous, you'll have a version of Jean's yoga, Tom's yoga or Jody's yoga. As with friends, one teacher may influence you more than another. Yoga is traditionally handed down from teacher to student. A master would orally hand the teaching down to a





disciple who'd eventually become a master and hand the teachings down to his/her disciple, and so the tradition goes. If you've ever played the game of whispering a secret in a circle and then heard how the secret changed by the time it reached the tenth person, you'd understand how time and speech could alter teachings. This is why it's important to also study the ancient texts of yoga, The Upanishads, The Bhagavad Gita, The Sutras, etc. In yoga philosophy, this is called, "Svadhyaya," which is the study of sacred texts.

As you continue your yoga studies, ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Is my study of yoga deepening my understanding of the relationship between mind and body?
- 2) Is my study of yoga deepening my sensitivity to all sentient life?
- 3) Is my study of yoga creating more peace in my life?

These are questions to help you find the right teachers along the way. Teachers who'll challenge you on many levels, not only the physical level.

This is the path of yoga.

Namaste,  
Joan

**Do you have a question for Joan?**

**Send your questions or mail to Joan .**

**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 For The Month](#) | [Yoga Philosophy](#) | [Yoga Tip](#) | [Massage Tip](#) | [Yo Joan](#) | [Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest](#)**  
**[Yoyoga Bookstore](#) | [About Joan](#) | [Seminars](#) | [Links](#) | [Archives](#) | [Home](#)**

**Yoyoga, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 5013**



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



## Down but not out

Dear Joan,

I am wondering if you think whether it is possible to heal depression through yoga. When I read about the truth within the path, and how you can mediate and realize that we are all united and all one, and that our thinking is really what creates the illusion of the so called 'reality' which if it is wrongly focused creates disease (note the word dis-ease), then it becomes clear that even depression can be healed. However, doctors say that there is a chemical in the brain that when out of balance causes the sickness. What are your thoughts?

Claudia



Dear Claudia,

**I think both avenues have something to them. Depression can certainly be a chemical imbalance and may progress to the point where medication is necessary; however, this should be a last resort. It's important to try to discover the source of your pain. Kahil Gibran said it so well, "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding." What is your depression saying to you? Is your love life in a crisis? Is your work troubling you? Are troubling past memories haunting you? Even knowing the answers to these questions does not necessarily solve the depression. There are many more questions. Each question leads to another. Curing depression often requires deep introspection, the kind many of us are not willing to do. It is so much easier to flip on the TV, pop a pill, and zone out into complacency. Yet, these can be band-aids in healing depression. It may give temporary relief, but when the TV is turned off, the pill wears off, the blues turn back on.**

**Hatha yoga is the study of the physical body as a means to a more peaceful life. It is a form of natural healing. Here is a simple study to demonstrate how your physical body can affect your mood. Hunch your back and round your shoulders. Notice your emotions as you do this. Now, bring your shoulders in line with your ears and down away from your neck. Open your chest. Bring your chin parallel with the ground. Notice your emotions now. Simple movements like this can affect your mood.**

**any of us are not aware how deeply the simple ways we hold our body affects us. The study of the yoga stures increases our awareness to our movements, making us more aware of our individual flexibility and**

**strength. The length of time we hold yoga postures helps remind us of the vast possibilities within us. Each posture is balanced with another. For example, a forward bend is balanced with a backward bend. This balancing adjusts every aspect of our self, our bodymind. As the postures are held, the mind engages with the breath. Clearing and balancing the bodymind through yoga postures releases mental and physical phlegm. It ens the breath as it opens the spine, but it doesn't stop there. It continues on as it opens the heart and ens the mind.**

**An additional difficulty in uncovering the source of depression is the inactivity that goes along with blue feelings. How are you going to get to the source if you can't even get out of bed? Taking a yoga class can help to motivate you to get physical. At home, you may find that doing even one breathing exercise is exhausting. A yoga class can help motivate you to stick with an important balancing exercise that you might have given up on at home.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **Harpy Yoga classes**

Dear Joan

I was recently searching the internet for a place to learn more about yoga, possibly take a few classes, etc. and I was very interested when I discovered your website. I was especially interested when I noticed the picture of you playing the harp because I graduated from U of I about two years ago and I received my Bachelor's Degree in Harp Performance! The main reason I am e-mailing you though is to see if Yoyoga is an actual learning facility or do you only work privately? I couldn't find any information about classes or group instruction anywhere and I was wondering if that was something you offered? I have been practicing yoga a little at home just by using videos and I have taken a couple of classes in the it but I would like to attend a class just to be sure I am learning everything properly. If you do not offer classes, is there anyway you could recommend somewhere for me to go? Please feel free to e-mail me back when you have a free moment. I really appreciate your time. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Tina

**Dear Tina,**

**My class and seminar information is listed on my website in the seminar section of the site. I update it regularly. I encourage you, Tina, to continue to explore classes close to where you live. [YogaChicago Newspaper](#) on the web offers a resource listing for readers of teachers and classes throughout the Chicago area. Let your harp and your heart continue to embrace each other through yoga studies.**

## **Stylin'**

Dear Joan

there. I'm new to the area and I'm looking for a good yoga studio. I'm somewhat new to the practice and I'd like to itinue learning. I've started out by trying Hatha, Vinyasana and Forrest. I don't yet have a preference in terms of style. I'm up for anything. I'd love some suggestions from you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks, and Namaste.  
Meegan

ar Meegan,

**My suggestion, continue on! Sounds like you are doing great in exploring various styles. You mention that you have studied Hatha, Vinyasana, and Forrest. For clarification, Hatha is the form of yoga that uses the physical body as a tool toward enlightenment. Vinyasana are yoga postures that are connected into flowing movements. Forest is Ana Forest, a current yoga teacher who has developed a particular style of teaching and studying the postures. Hatha is the main umbrella for all study of the postures. Check out the website: [yoga.com](http://yoga.com). Under the section, "Styles of yoga," there is an article called, "What style is right for you?" It's a great article that gives a great overview of the many different styles of yoga study.**

Namaste,  
Joan

**Yo?**

Dear Joan

How has the practice of yoga changed your life? Were there any tough choices you had to make? What are the plusses and are there any minuses?

t Curious  
Sardonicus

Dear Sardonicus,

**I can always depend on you to come up with really personal questions! The study of yoga is a continual evolutionary learning process for me. Yes, it has had its ups and downs. Sometimes the physical postures loose their appeal for me, but when my meditation practice becomes uncomfortable and I notice my back aching or tense, I realize how important a regular study of the postures are.**

**When I broke my kneecap from a fall in 2001, it was a tough choice for me to stop teaching then. I realized that I could have continued teaching through simple verbal instructions, but I chose to take several months off from teaching to heal my knee and to "recharge" my study. I went to an ashram for a couple weeks then. I think this type of experience is extremely important for me. It is so easy to become "lost in the material pool," (A quote from the Bhagavad-Gita). An ashram reminds me that a yoga lifestyle is possible and needed within our chaotic world.**

**I sometimes get frustrated with all the publicity around yoga. I also get disheartened when I hear gossip coming from students or particularly from teachers of yoga. I wonder if they have studied the Yoga Sutra or the Upanishads or many of the other texts of yoga, but then I realize that my own judgmental mind kicked in and I return to the study of these ancient texts myself for guidance out of judgments and into a compassionate art.**

...ese are just some of my experiences with yoga. Thank you so much for your interest in asking.



Asana	Philosophy	Yoga Tips	Massage Tip
Recipe	Bookstore	About Joan	Seminars
Yo Joan	Links	Archives	Home

## Yo Joan



### Hip-Hip-Horray!

Dear Joan,

It seems as though you have offered numerous people great advice, and was hoping that you might be able to help me out a bit as well. Im a 24 year old male, trying to undertake meditation and yoga. After years of playing sports, and then taking quite an extended break from physical activity, I find myself to be very, very unflexible. In truth, I cannot even sit Indian style anymore. After searching the web for books and ideas, I have no idea where to begin to even grasp something as simple as sitting Indian style. What kind of stretches do I need to do? How can I regain any sort of flexibility? Are there are any particular readings that you can recommend? If you could even point me in direction of where I can find this information I would be so grateful, I just dont know where to begin. Thank you for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon.



Regards,  
Milan

Dear Milan,

**You need to do exercises to open the hips. Poses like Butterfly pose where you are seated with the soles of the feet coming together in front of you. If the soles don't touch, bring them as close together as you can, and rest your hands on the ground next to you for support. In time the soles will come closer together and in toward your body, and your hands will be able to rest on your ankles. Stay for at least several long slow breaths in the pose. Stay as long as you can breathe comfortably. Each day it will be longer.**

**Another way to slowly open the hips, lie on your back with your feet propped up against the wall and let your legs fall out to the sides. Rest here for as long as you comfortably can. When you are ready to come out of this stance, bring your hands on the outside of your legs and help push them back together so as not to overstrain the inner thigh muscles.**

Triangle pose is a great standing pose to open the hips. Warrior 2 pose also extends the hip flexor muscles. These standing poses may be easier for you to start with before going to the seated poses.

Discuss these poses with your yoga teacher, who will probably have even more suggestions for you. Do you have a yoga teacher? If not, then that is number one on the list. Sign up for a class and begin working these postures in the supportive community of a yoga class. Hip, Hip Horray!! Find a yoga class today!

Namaste,  
Joan

## Wars of the mind

Dear Joan,

What advise do you have to come to terms with this election and the senseless war? I am struggling.

MO

Dear MO,

As it appears all wars are senseless, especially when our higher selves encourage us to seek other more peaceful resolutions. Wars have been around for a long time. Each generation has experienced wars, whether in America or abroad. Each war contains horrors, which can seem almost unbelievable to those physically removed from the places where the war is taking place. The United States is now involved in a war in Iraq, but there are also other wars currently going on around the world. Thousands are dying in Africa on a daily basis through tribal warfare and terrorism. Daily, innocent people are victimized and tortured. Yet, we only have to look into our neighboring South America to see that there are significant wars going on there too. And, even closer to home, in fact right in our very homes, many people are battered and abused every day. Others need only peek out their living room curtain to see the gunfights happening on their very own USA Street. How can we make sense out of any of this?

We cannot expect any war to be truly resolved unless we come to terms with, and find peace within the wars going on in our own minds. We need political figures who are not run by their egos, but are run by the peace that is evident within their lives and souls. There are examples in our lifetime, like Mahatma Gandhi of India, who have demonstrated that the political process can work with the right people involved. A "Right" person means a person who has delved into the deepest aspects of humanity, has explored his or her own consciousness profoundly, and does not harbor resentments but instead seeks peace in every step and every breath. A person who does not rule by might, but instead rules by example.

This comes directly to you, MO. What is your life demonstrating? How do you resolve the conflicts in your personal life? Without looking outside of yourself to place judgment on a war, a country, or the elections, what judgments are you placing on yourself on a moment-to-moment basis? How can you soften the negative war being waged daily in your own mind? We all have various versions of these wars going on in the dialogues of our busy minds. How can you soften yours? How can you transcend this inner war and approach every encounter, every person, every difficult moment with love in your heart and joy in your soul?

**War has been around for each and every generation. External conflict is a result of internal conflict. The answers to this war, and every war, lie within you, and only you. Search deeply. The health of our world depends upon how deeply you search.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **No Yogi left behind**

Dear Joan

I will be using the 3rd Edition of your "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" in the course I will teaching at a local university, starting next week. This is a wonderful book. Thank you!

I just took the "Self-Test for the Yoga-Challenged" quiz on page 16. As far as I can tell, some of the answers are set up wrong, based on the scoring.

For example:

#2: I would think "Hurts 24 hours" a day" would be d, not b.

#3: The coccyx answer would be C, not A.

: I would think the answer would be D, not A.

: Why wouldn't C be the A answer?

#9: I'm not understanding why C is where it is.

This is confusing. Can you please tell me what I'm not getting here? I've been doing yoga since 1979 and only scored 21--which doesn't qualify me to be a yogini!.. I would love a quick response, as students will be reviewing this next week. Thanks for your help.

**Namaste,  
Luann**

**Dear Luann,**

**You are right! You WISE Yogini, you! Please tell the students to come up with their own ratings on what the answers should be. Have them do one review now, and then to review the answers again after they have read the whole book to see if any of their answers would rate differently then The editors thought the quiz was too difficult in the second edition, so this edition was simplified, but in essence some of the answers are now set up wrong. I think it is even more confusing now! I agree with you!! I don't know how is escaped us in the final review of the book, but it did. Luckily we were not writing a math book.**

**#2, should be D with three points**

**#3 Coccyx could be A or C, tho c could be the sacrum, tho that is large, so...talk about confusing!**

**#6 D is right**

**#8 C is the right answer. It is totally weird to have A as the answer!**

**I really think almost any of these would be a good answer because yoga is non-competitive.**

**The point is, these points are completely messed up. It is a good example to question everything! Thank you for questioning the author! Going right to the source, that's a true yogini!! Tell your students hello for me, and feel free to write me at anytime. Om shanti.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

## **This lifetime or next?**

Dear Joan

Its kind of you to wish all of us happy holidays. I wish you a fun filled time. Also I am kind of interested in knowing when you were talking about enlightenment have you reached the level where all your chakras are fully opened (I heard it takes years!). And how do we know if we will practice yoga in our next lifetime? I am also interested in practicing kundalini yoga, and bhakti yoga. Have you also practice other yogas also besides hatha yoga? Great talking to you again!

Namaste,  
Clint

**Dear Clint,**

**I am not sure what the levels are in enlightenment or in chakras. I don't believe it's linear, like in school grades. I've heard it takes lifetimes to open chakras and/or to reach enlightenment. I'm not sure which lifetime I am at, so I can't really say where I am at in this process. I suppose you can't really know for sure if you will practice yoga in the next lifetime. You can hope so though. When I first started studying yoga, it didn't have all the various classifications or different names. Or rather, if it did, I was not aware of them. It was all just called "Yoga." So, in the process of studying yoga, I have studied many areas, hatha (physical postures) being one of them. The names and styles continue to expand. Some names may be around for many years to come, and some may not be around next year. Yet, the study of "Yoga," or union, has been around for thousands of years, and is still coming around again.**

**Namaste,  
Joan**

**Do you have a question for Joan?  
Send your questions or mail to [Joan](mailto:Joan) .**