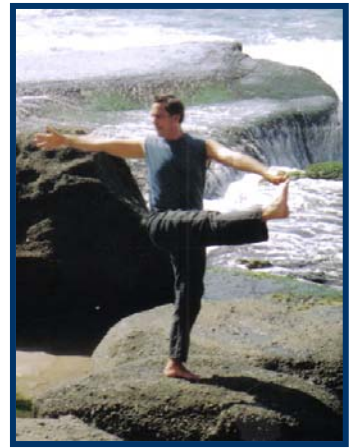




# WHY PRACTICE YOGA ?

Jon Burras



The last few years has seen a substantial rise in the popularity of yoga. While this recent trend has brought many new comers to the yoga experience there is often some confusion as to the benefits of yoga. The following is a brief summary of the many benefits that yoga can offer.

## 1. Flexibility

One of the primary benefits of a regular yoga practice is that one is able to develop a body that is more flexible. Reaching down to touch one's toes or extending an arm up to grab an object become much easier. With flexibility comes overall ease of movement in normal daily activities.

## 2. Anti-aging

Aging does not have to be what is portrayed by the media and the traditional medical model. Yoga helps one age gracefully, keeping the joints fluid and open, allowing movement to be fluid and pain free. Skin is refreshed and organs are balanced as the forces that add to our normal aging are reversed. The common stiffness usually found in those who age poorly is avoided.

## 3. Breath

Yoga brings attention to the breath. Deep regular breathing and postures that gently elongate the muscles of respiration allow the breath to deepen and slow down. Increased amounts of oxygen are able to reach cells and revitalize the tissues. A slower and deeper breath aids in relaxation and calmness.

## 4. Strength and tone

Muscle tone and strength are achieved by utilizing the body's own weight to provide resistance. This helps in firming and shaping the overall body appearance as well as providing the necessary strength for daily activities. Conditions like Osteoporosis are avoided as bone growth is greatly enhanced.

## 5. Balance

Balance is not something that most people think about until they have trouble standing upright. What many elderly fear greatly is to lose their balance and slip and fall. Yoga helps to stabilize us and provides a solid sense of balance. This insures that we are well grounded and not as prone to falling or slipping as we age.

## 6. Focus

Many people are scattered and disoriented in their normal waking lives. Yoga helps to bring us back to a focal point to become clear with our goals and intentions. As we become focused we are better able to witness ourselves and achieve our goals.

## 7. Expansive movement

Most of the movement in our culture is contractive in nature. This means that we move to tighten up and harden ourselves. Unfortunately, this is what stress and repression are already doing to us. Yoga is a system of expansive expression that allows us to counteract the forces of stress and repression in order to expand through our bodies.

## **8. General health**

For those accustomed to grabbing a pill every time they are uncomfortable, yoga offers another solution. A regular yoga practice brings life and energy to the body, improves overall circulation, as well as increases organ and gland functioning. As you stretch through the body the various systems of the body begin to have a greater capacity to function fully.

## **9. Cosmetic results**

People often report that they feel and look better with a regular yoga practice. They are able to trim down and feel strong and toned. This helps to build confidence and radiance about one's body.

## **10. Body self-discovery**

The story of our lives is often held within the body. Every fall or accident from the past is stored within our musculature. Yoga begins to strip away the layers of holding to release old patterns. In this manner yoga becomes a marvelous tool for healing. Old and restrictive patterns of movement are replaced by more dynamic and natural ways to move.

## **11. Metaphor for life**

What do you do when difficult sensations or emotions show up in your life? Do you face this adversity or run away? Yoga becomes a metaphor to show us new ways to work through challenging sensations and emotions. We are encouraged to accept what we are feeling rather than to run from these feelings.

## **12. Relaxation**

Most people find it very difficult to relax. They are wound up nearly always and seldom let their guard down. Yoga offers us an opportunity to unwind and melt away the tension and stress that keep us locked up. As we do so we are able to allow the body to heal itself.

## **13. Energy flow**

There is a natural flow of energy that travels through us when we practice yoga. This is like an electric current that touches every cell. As the connective tissue of the body opens up the blockages that prevent energy from flowing are released. In this manner we become more open to removing these blockages.

## **14. Removes toxins**

As we move and sweat through the yoga practice toxins are released and flushed out. This occurs through the skin, breath, and the lymphatic system. Once released, we are free to allow new nutrients in to nourish us.

