

**YogaMe ~ The Beginners Ebook to Better  
Understanding this Exercises, It's Not Just  
Stretching ~ You Know!**



by Terry D. Clark

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## **Introduction**

As we march into this bright new millennium, we're constantly reminded of the fusion of east and west.

Whether it's through satellite television programming that beams in productions from different cultures, enjoying books and music from distant lands that, only a generation or two ago, couldn't be accessed, and – of course – communicating with people across time and space through the Internet and other telecommunications advancements, the world has become a much smaller place. Indeed, when Marshall McLuan coined the term Global Village, even he probably didn't envision so much, so fast, so soon.

Riding the wave of information that now crisscrosses our tiny planet is something that has its roots in ancient history, yet is experiencing a blossoming in the west that continues to gain momentum with each passing year. Whether it's at a local YMCA or a lush spiritual retreat in the Everglades, Yoga is establishing itself as a mainstay in western culture; indeed, in global culture.

However, many people are reluctant to experience the

physical, emotional, and psychological health benefits of yoga; and there is really only one major reason for this: misinformation.

While many people might truly enjoy yoga and find it to be the side-effect free answer to a lot of their emotional and physical ailments, they just don't know enough about the subject to take that first step.

Furthermore, a stereotype out there that seems to persist despite evidence to the contrary is that yoga is a religious following; and that to experience its many health benefits somehow obliges one to renounce their faith or, worse, run away to some commune and eat tofu in between chanting sessions.

While, yes, if you'd like to go to a retreat and enjoy tofu and chanting, that's probably possible (almost anything is possible, as long as it's legal and people want to do it, right?).

Yet that vision of yoga – people with shaved heads and handing flowers to strangers at the airport – is by no means the overall picture. Yoga is really a very simple, accessible, and in many countries around the world, ordinary thing to

do.

In that light, this book is created with one goal in mind: to demystify yoga for you, and provide you with a clear, simple, and fun introduction to the topic.

If you've never been exposed to any kind of yoga (except for what you might have seen on television), then this book is for you!

In addition, even if you have experienced some kinds of yoga (perhaps a friend dragged you to a class at the local recreation center all those years ago), this book will reignite your interest in the topic and reattach you to a mode of body movement and mind focus that has lived in ancient lands for millennium.

This ebook is conveniently organized into four sections:

- \* What is Yoga?
- \* Why is Yoga Beneficial?
- \* Different Kinds of Yoga
- \* Yoga Equipment & Accessories



As you read through these sections, please bear in mind that there is absolutely no attempt here, directly or indirectly (or in any other way possible!) to endorse or promote any religious view. This is because the view of this book is same view that is held by the world's foremost authorities on yoga: that it is not a religion. It does not have a dogma.

While there are indeed different schools and streams of yoga – there are actually thousands of them – they have all managed to coexist quite peacefully because, for the most part, yoga is not evangelical, which simply means that it does not seek to spread itself as part of its mission.

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Please note that the statement above in no way criticizes or comments on evangelical orders, such as Evangelical Christianity; the point here is simply that the overwhelming majority of yoga movements does not consider spreading yoga to be a tenet of its identity.

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Yet, while the yoga that is described in this book (and experienced in most of the world) is not a religion, it does

very seamlessly fit into many people's existing religious framework.

In other words, if you are a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, or anything else and identify yourself as being a part of any faith at all, yoga doesn't ask you to replace that faith with someone else, or offer you a competing or contradictory view of what you already believe.

So please remember: yoga, as it is discussed and promoted in this book (and in virtually every book worth reading!) is not a religion.

As we'll begin to understand in the next section of this book, yoga is really nothing more, and nothing less, than harnessing the power of human attention, and using it to benefit the body and mind. It is an approach to life, here and now.

## **What is Yoga?**

Yoga can seem like a complicated concept; or, at the very

least, a dizzying array of physical manipulations that turn seemingly happy-looking human beings into happy looking human pretzels.

Or even more disconcerting, as we have alluded to in the

Introduction, a stereotype does exist in places where the term yoga is synonymous with cult, or some kind of archaic spiritual belief that compels one to quit their job, sell their house, and go live in the middle of nowhere.

In actual fact, Yoga is a very basic thing; and if you've had the opportunity to visit a country where it has been established for generations – India, Japan, China, and others – it's really rather, well, ordinary.

The practice of yoga came to the west back in 1893 when one of India's celebrated gurus, Swami Vivekananda, was welcomed at the World Fair in Chicago. He is now known for having sparked the West's interest in yoga.

Literally, the word yoga comes from the Sanskrit term Yug, which means: “to yoke, bind, join, or direct one's attention”.

At the same time, yoga can also imply concepts such as fusion, union, and discipline.

The sacred scriptures of Hinduism (an ancient belief system from India that has a global presence) also defines yoga as “unitive discipline”; the kind of discipline that, according to experts Georg Feuerstein and Stephan Bodian in their book *Living Yoga*, leads to inner and outer union, harmony and joy.

In essence, yoga is most commonly understood as conscious living; of tapping into one’s inner potential for happiness (what Sankrit refers to as ananda).

### **What Yoga Isn’t**

Sometimes it’s helpful to understand things by what they aren’t; especially when dealing with a topic, like Yoga, that is quite easily misunderstood.

Authors and yoga scholars Feuerstein and Bodian help us understand yoga by telling us what it is NOT:

Yoga is NOT calisthenics (marked by the headstand, the lotus posture or some pretzel-like pose). While it is true that yoga involves many postures – especially in hatha yoga – these are only intended to make people get in touch with their inner feelings.

Yoga is NOT a system of meditation – or a religion  
– the way many people are misled to believe.  
Meditation is only part of the whole process of  
bringing ourselves into the realm of the spiritual.

### **The Essence of Yoga**

Virtually all yogic science and philosophy states that a human being is but a fragment of an enormous universe, and when this human being learns to “communion” with this vastness, then he/she attains union with something that is bigger than him/her. This attachment or tapping into something bigger thus enables one to walk the true path of happiness. By flowing along with the force, the individual is able to discover truth.

And with truth comes realization; but to attain realization, our words, thoughts and deeds must be based on truth.

People attend courses on yoga and go to studios to learn new techniques in yoga, but yoga teacher Tim Miller said that “true yoga begins when [you] leave the studio; it’s all about being awake and being mindful of your actions”.

## **Yoga and Physical Health**

Yoga does not see a distinction between the body and the mind; and this is an understanding that western psychology has also concluded for many years now (the link between mental health and physical health, and vice versa).

If you've come to this book looking to understand yoga as a means to help your body heal or improve, then please don't worry; you've come to the right place!

Yoga is indeed a process that involves releasing blocked tension and energy in the body, and helping make the muscles, tendons, joints, ligaments, and all other components work to their utmost potential.

Yoga believes that human beings are optimally designed, by nature, to be flexible and agile; and stiffness and lack of mobility only arrive when the body is unhealthy or out of alignment.

Therefore, countless people have found themselves in a yoga class, or on a yoga mat at home in front of a Yoga video or DVD, in the hopes of improving their physical health; and perhaps you may be one of them. If that's the

case, then keep reading!

There are proven physical benefits of yoga, which include:

- \*increased flexibility and range of motion.
- \*reduced pain in joints and muscles.
- \*stronger immune system.
- \*stronger lung capacity and therefore higher quality respiration.
- \*increased metabolism (which can lead to weight loss!).
- \*higher quality of sleep (especially due to improved breathing and a more oxygenated body).

Given that certain yoga practices require postures to be mastered, yoga has always helped promote the body's flexibility; it also helps in lubricating the joints, ligaments and tendons. Yoga detoxifies by increasing the flow of blood to various parts of the body. It helps tone and invigorate muscles that have grown flaccid and weak.

So please do keep in mind that, while yoga is often discussed in terms of its mental approach, there are clear

and proven physical benefits that are a part of this approach.

Therefore, if weight loss is your goal, or the ability to shovel the snow in winter without having your back ache for days, then yoga is as viable an option to you as it is for the stressed-out corporate executive who needs to find a strategy for coping with the craziness of her busy life!

### **Why is Yoga Beneficial?**

As we've repeatedly pointed out in this book (and probably started to bore you with; sorry!), yoga is not a religion. It can be religious if one wants it to be, and it can co-exist with an existing religious belief. But yoga itself is not religious in the sense that it focuses on belief or faith.

Yoga is a science; and indeed, in many places in the world (such as India), it is referred to as a science. This is not mere playing with words; it truly is approached as a science, which means that it is understood in terms of the scientific method.



Yogic science seeks to verify cause and effect, and build principles based upon objective observations. Indeed, in many places in the world, to be a yogic master of any credibility, one must be highly educated in the sciences, including physics and the biological sciences.

This discussion on yoga as science is important for us to have here, because it allows us to sensibly ask the question: what are the benefits of yoga? After all, if yoga is a faith or a belief, then asking this question isn't fair; because it's one that yoga cannot answer in terms that we can objectively understand.

Yet (again...sorry!) yoga is a science; as empirical and pragmatic as kinesiology, or exercise science, which seeks to understand how the body acts and reacts to changes in the internal physical environment. And even more simply than any of this: each of us has a right to ask the basic question why should I bother doing this yoga thing? before we should be asked to consider experiencing it for ourselves.

Indeed, while the experience of yoga cannot be reduced to words – just as reading a book on preparing for a marathon isn't going to actually physically prepare you to run a marathon – the goals and principles of yoga can easily be

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