

The Healing Effects of Yoga

By: Janelle Evans

Photography By: Wyndam Pounds

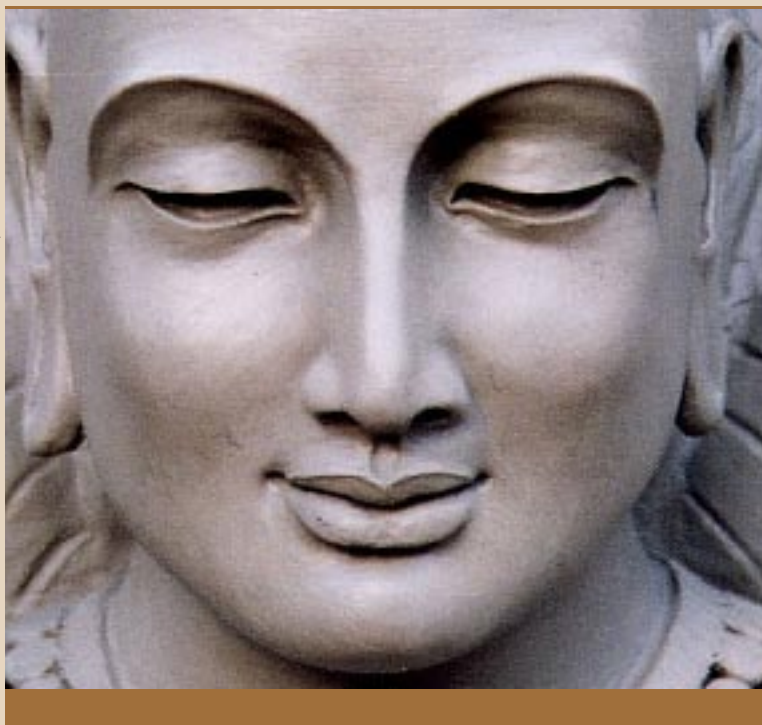
"The Yoking of all the powers of body, mind and soul to God...the disciplining of the intellect, the mind, the emotions, and the will-power."

Mahatma Gandhi

Ancient transcripts on palm leaves trace the origin of yoga back over 5,000 years to the Northern India's Indus-Sarasvati civilization. Veda priest's ritual mantra (chants) and sacred text to achieve enlightenment are recorded in their oldest of documents. In the mid- to late-1990s, the ancient practice got a new lease on life. Its initial surge in the 1960's was short lived as it was dismissed as yet another streak of madness from the back-to-earth hippie generation. Now this ancient practice is getting a new lease on life.

Yoga postures exercise every part of the body, stretching and toning the muscles and joints, the spine and skeletal system and the internal organs, glands and nerves. Breathing exercises are designed to revitalize the body and help control the mind. This spiritual practice incorporates a healthy lifestyle and diet, yoga has been attributed to assisting in overcoming eating disorders, treating and prevention of diabetes, relieve arthritis, reducing stress and correcting posture.

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit verbal root 'yuj,' which means 'to yoke' or 'join'. Yoga has taken several paths over the centuries but they all lead to unify one's mind, body and spirit. According to *Trisha Lamb*, Associate Director of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, there are five primary branches of Yoga: Jnan-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, and Hatha-Yoga, with many secondary types. In addition, there are many different styles of Hatha-Yoga, the branch of yoga most often practiced in the United States today. The differences in style are usually about emphasis, such as alignment of the body, coordination of breath and movement, or the flow from one posture to another.



The Head of Panranjali
Courtesy of the International
Association of Yoga Therapists

Today more than 20 million Americans are practicing yoga.

Part of yoga's popularity is due to the passionate testimonies of yoga-loving celebrities; Sting has publicized its dramatic enhancement of his sex life. Madonna, once an avid weight lifter, sold her fitness equipment and now says yoga is her only workout. Colorado Springs residents are benefiting from yoga therapy too!

Mary Ann Campbell's experience with yoga is dramatic, but yoga enthusiasts typically offer stories of impressive physical and emotional changes.

Mary Ann Campbell
Cancer Survivor

Diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 50, "I used to lie on the floor and cry." She has now been cancer free for 2 years!

In the space of six months, Mary Ann Campbell divorced, turned 50 and learned she had an advanced stage of breast cancer. Her sorrow was, at times, overwhelming. "I used to lie on the floor and cry," she said.

Campbell had started taking yoga four months before her diagnosis. Through chemotherapy and the loss of her breasts, she kept practicing yoga. "It saved my life, in my opinion," Campbell said. "Even if I die of cancer, it will have saved by sanity for a period of time."

"Emotionally, I don't think I could have handled it. Yoga helped me to focus, to keep my head on straight. Physically, the doctor said I did not have a good prognosis. I'm two years out now with nothing going on."

Campbell practices a form of yoga called Bikram that is practiced in a humidified room heated to more than 100 degrees. The 26 Bikram poses are each done twice, in the same order and held for the same amount of time. "I'd do chemo and try to get to yoga before I got sick," Campbell said. "I'd sweat out as much of it as I could. I had no hair. I'd wear my little bandana; go to yoga, sweat and cry."

"I feel great. Yoga helped me make the kind of changes I think I really needed to be healthy and happy." For Campbell, that meant buying a new home, changing jobs and rearranging her schedule to spend more time with her two teen-aged children. She's also rearranged it so she can practice yoga four days a week.



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Beth McCarthy
Local Yoga Instructor at Penrose Hospital,
YMCA, and Plum Blossom Yoga

"Yoga works on a very deep, positive, powerful level, integrating body, mind, heart and spirit as it creates balance, harmony, health and happiness for all those that practice with sincerity, intelligence and discipline."

In need of rejuvenation, Beth McCarthy took her first class five years ago, after the birth of her fourth child. She became so hooked on yoga she quit a high-stress job as a Corporate Art Consultant and business owner. Its effects led her to a journey of becoming a Professional Yoga Therapist to introduce the healing and balancing benefits of yoga to others.

"Yoga has helped me to live with authenticity, self-love, balance and joy. The gifts that I have received from yoga, I now share."

Today, yoga's followers cross all lines – Corporate CEOs practice "downward dog" next to elementary school principals. Soccer moms arch into the camel pose while their children take toddlers' classes in the studio next door. Classes have been introduced for pregnant women, babies and even for man's best friend.





*Kristen Cook
Pikes Peak Marathon Runner*

Cook, like Madonna, was once an avid weight lifter. Since she started practicing yoga three years ago, Kristin Cook's posture has improved so much she's often told she looks taller.

*Sara Rice
Spring Street Studio*

"Just yoga, that's all I've really done for the past five years," she said. "And I'm stronger and healthier than I've ever been."

In almost a decade of practicing yoga, Sara Rice has seen her body change and become leaner – something she had never accomplished with spinning, weight lifting or the other workouts in which she once engaged.

Rice sees the benefits in her mirror, and feels it in her attitude. "Within a year (of starting yoga), my whole body looked completely different," she said. "I had always been in shape, but I'd never looked like that before – leaner, longer. I became a lot stronger. It was amazing.

"It's sort of a natural drug. As a person who's prone to some depression ... if I miss it for three or four days, I notice the change. Even my husband will say, 'Sara, you need to do yoga.'"

While some of its unconverted may still suspect it's a fad, a nation of its students say otherwise. As for Rice, "It's a lifestyle," she says, "I can't imagine it ever dying out."

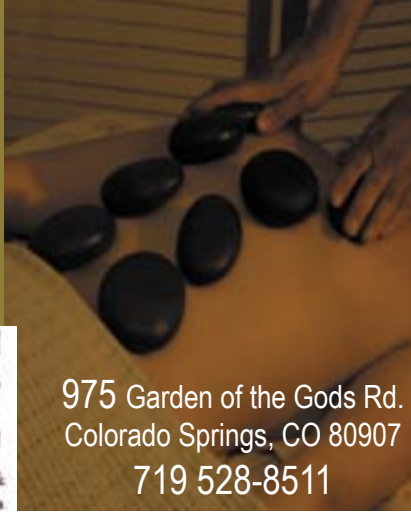
"I really find yoga is the most physically overall beneficial workout I've ever done," she said. "It's challenging mentally and physically. And there's always a higher level you can take it to, so you don't get board."

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Gita According to Mahatma Gandhi By: Gandhi

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