

ENLIGHTENED YOGA

What is Yoga? The art and science of Yoga is intended for one purpose-to awaken a renewed sense of balance and harmony. In fact, the word Yoga itself means “union” of body, mind and spirit. Its true practice evokes a sense of ‘comfortable steadiness’ that will reawaken you to your true self.

Yoga, according to the ancient yogic text, (the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali,) is “Mastery over the modifications of the mind.” This refers to the healing path of Yoga as a vehicle that helps us see through patterns of thought and emotion that keep us separate from ourselves, or in union with the body, mind and spirit. Yoga facilitates and engenders unity at all levels of our being. It includes techniques for every aspect of our lives. As we explore and integrate the different parts of ourselves with our awareness, we need to take care to honor all the facets of our being. By bringing awareness to the physical aspects, for example, we can begin the healing process by “letting go” of self-imposed limitations in a pose, and in the process, rediscover ourselves, our true nature.

The key to bringing awareness to a yoga posture is to explore what is going on inside of it, not only on the outside. Then, with practice, you will learn to bring consciousness to that part of you, and healing will allow the flow of energy you experience internally to establish the body in the most balanced way possible. Each asana (posture) becomes a vehicle for self-awareness, and its healing effects are magnified by activity collaborating *with* it rather than *resisting* it. You will learn that by bringing awareness to each pose, you will respond from the inside out. Your inner knowledge and healing of the body/mind will grow; you will feel more coordinated in your movements; posture improves; circulation improves; wastes will be eliminated by the body more efficiently; breathing deepens; and a positive self image emerges naturally, arising out of your own awareness and consciousness. This healing brings harmony to the whole person.

In terms of the physical body, Yoga is the integration of all the various physiological systems with their different cells, tissues and organs into a harmoniously functioning unity so that we have perfect physical health. This is achieved through flexibility, strengthening, and gentle, conscious activity.

From the perspective of the energy body, Yoga is the integration of the breath and subtle energy centers called chakras. Slow, conscious, complete breathing deepens awareness at all levels.

Within the psycho-emotional body, Yoga is the integration and balance of all aspects of mind and emotion.

From the perspective of the wisdom body, Yoga is the quality of discrimination that allows us to see the difference between the personal self and the cosmic Self. It is this function of witnessing that allows us to see life as a Unity rather than as fragments.

This understanding of life as a unified whole takes us into the bliss body or spiritual body. At this level, Yoga is the appreciation and experience of the joy of life through a connection to the deepest part of ourselves which is synonymous with the universal Self.

Through this Enlightened, Healing path of Yoga, a deconditioning takes place in which boundaries and barriers that keep us separate are slowly removed. It is a journey, rather than a goal, to remembering who you really are. This healing journey **is** the essence of Yoga.

Final Thought: Enjoy your practice! Practice for the joy and satisfaction of the process. One of the cornerstones in the foundations of Yoga is non-attachment to the fruits of your actions. So practice for the pleasure of it. On days when the pleasure of it is not immediately apparent (and there will be days like that!), find pleasure in the practice. Enjoy!!

Denise Ellis, B.A., R.Y.T., I.Y.T., has been on her own joyful healing path of Yoga for the last twenty or so years, through her own practice, and teaching for the last eight. She teaches Ayur-Yoga for The Center of Enlightened Medicine in Ann Arbor; and Wellness Classes, Therapeutic Yoga, and private sessions in Yoga Therapy and Emotional Stress Release in the Toledo area. Contact Denise through C.E.M. or at 419-868-9199.

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