

Pain-free Yoga

Physical activity is supposed to strengthen and heal the body. But, should doing something so good really feel so bad? If you don't subscribe to the "no pain, no gain" exercise philosophy, pain-free yoga is a great choice for you.

Practicing yoga offers many benefits. It can heal the body while it increases your strength, flexibility and breathing capacity. Yoga is widely recommended as part of regular physical therapy to condition the physical body, calm the mind and bring peace to your spirit.

One thing to remember while practicing yoga is that there is no competition. Unlike working out in a crowded gym, you are not meant to be better, or faster, or stronger than anyone else. This can be a tough obstacle for the average North American to overcome. If you're looking at what other students are doing, you're not concentrating on your own body and spirit. Don't fret over the good posture of the person next to you, or be envious of how far they can stretch and how fluidly they breathe. It doesn't matter if you can or cannot do that pose a little bit better; so don't force your body into discomfort.

Pain-free yoga is never meant to hurt you. It's not about trying to outdo the guy next to you, or making your Asana pose better than the girl in the front row. You are not competing with anyone when practicing yoga, not even yourself. Ideally, group yoga sessions will be different every time you meet, and it isn't a big deal if you aren't as flexible today as you were yesterday or if that pose you practiced for hours just won't fall into place. Your body changes from day to day. Often you'll gain a few steps, and sometimes you'll feel as though you've fallen back a step or two. It's all right. Don't let it become a personal tragedy or keep you from carrying on with your yoga program.

Your focus should always be on how your body feels right now. Yesterday is over and tomorrow hasn't come. How you feel at the very moment you're practicing is what makes a successful and pain-free yoga session. If you listen to your body, it will tell you how much it wants to do today and how far it wants to go.

By trying to outdo another person in your group, or show off your magnificent yoga postures, you are defeating the very purpose of yoga. Yoga is meant to take you away from the competitive nature of today's world. It's supposed to allow you to feel your inner strength, and appreciate what your body is experiencing right now. Don't try to be a hero in yoga, or hurry through your poses just so you can check your email or get on with your busy day. If you find yourself impatient or uninspired, try actively working on your posture. You'll find that time goes by faster and that your sessions are more enjoyable.

A competitive spirit is closely related to impatience. If you feel that you are too competitive to appreciate the practice of yoga, your instructor may suggest that you stay in a pose for an extra few minutes. This is to enable you to examine your breathing, explore the pose and try to perfect it. Yoga is meant to be an active exercise for your body and mind. If you find the pose to be uncomfortable, just stop for a minute; analyze the reasons why you just want to get it over with. Even the subtlest changes in your position can help you be more relaxed and more focused on the posture. Pay attention to your breathing. Are you actively taking deep breaths and exhaling fully to rid your body of toxins? Proper breathing and posture can affect your mind in many ways.

If you want to be the fastest, or biggest, or strongest, buy a membership at a fitness centre. If, however, you want to experience a rich and fulfilling experience that leads to a healthy mind, body and spirit, try pain-free yoga.