



YOGA FOR YOU

Athletic, rejuvenating or meditative, there's a yoga style perfect for both your physical and emotional goals.

by Mari Pfeiffer

You might be a newcomer to yoga, or perhaps a seasoned yogini. Either way, chances are you practice yoga to increase flexibility and strength, reduce stress, improve your posture and calm your mind. But are you reaching your yoga goals? If you're not sure, don't assume you're missing out on some magical trick or mysterious wisdom.

"When people bump up against what's perceived as boredom or frustration," says Kelly Wood, yoga instructor and owner of Karuna Yoga in Los Angeles (www.karunayoga.net), "it's part of the process, part of breaking through to the next level. Perhaps the next level of yoga for you will come as a completely different style."

Trying a new or different practice is a good start, but according to Jeannine Frest of the Yoga Alliance, as many as 270 styles exist. Ananda, Power, Integral — finding the one that's right for you might seem daunting. It doesn't have to be. So what's the next step in finding your ideal style of yoga?

Ask yourself what you want from yoga. An intense workout? A good stretch with a heavy dose of meditation? A strong focus on proper alignment? The answers will help you narrow the choices and define your personal yoga goals. To help you get started, following are some of the most popular yoga styles in the U.S. today. Don't spend too much time studying their definitions, though. "Dive in," says Karuna Yoga's Wood. "It's still the best way to find out what's right for you."

Hatha describes any of the physical types of yoga, and can be either vigorous or gentle.

Through practicing the asanas (postures) and controlling your breath, Hatha strengthens your body and clears your mind, making it easier to meditate and pursue enlightenment.

Get Hot and Sweat a Lot: Ashtanga, Power and Jivamukti

In **Ashtanga**, poses are performed in strict order, starting with the Sun Salutations followed by standing, balance and inversion poses. For each movement there is one breath; each pose flows quickly into the next. The heat this sequence generates allows blood to circulate freely and the body to purge itself of toxins. "If you want an intense workout and to twist like a pretzel, try Ashtanga," says Yoga Alliance's Frest.

Power Yoga, popularized by gurus like Beryl Bender Birch and Bryan Kest, is based largely on Ashtanga but differs in that it doesn't necessarily follow a strict order of poses. Fast, spontaneous and flowing, Power Yoga will get your blood pumping and your sweat pouring.

Jivamukti is another vigorous form of yoga that strongly emphasizes heightened spiritual awareness. Created by David Life and Sharon Gannon, classes incorporate spiritual teachings, meditation and chanting with intense vinyasas.

Other vigorous styles of yoga include **White Lotus** and **Kali Ray TriYoga**.

Longer, Slower and Deeper: Iyengar

On the other side of the yoga spectrum is Iyengar Yoga, in

which poses are held for long periods, often aided by props such as straps and blocks. This pacing helps maximize both openness and awareness throughout the body. Named for the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar, this school of yoga focuses on proper alignment in order to achieve the most from each pose.

Like Iyengar Yoga, **Viniyoga** provides a much less vigorous pace than Ashtanga or Power Yoga. However, Viniyoga offers a more relaxed approach to placement of the body than Iyengar. It emphasizes the breath; in fact, each movement is led by the breath. For example, knees and elbows might be bent in a posture with emphasis placed on lengthening the spine. Viniyoga modifies postures to meet the needs of the individual student, so it is often taught as private, therapeutic yoga.

Svaroopa is another assisted style of Hatha Yoga that is slower and focused on form and breath as opposed to more athletic styles. When practiced regularly, Svaroopa allows you to experience a spacious, rejuvenating feeling of coming home to your body. It introduces alternate ways of performing familiar poses with emphasis on the spine with gentle movement from the tailbone up through to the neck.

Unfolding from Within: Kundalini, Anusara, Kripalu and Other Meditative Styles

Kundalini. In this enlightening style of yoga, energy is freed from the base of the spine upward through the seven chakras, strengthening the mind-body connection. Rapid, repetitive movements increase mindfulness of how breath and physical movement work in conjunction with each other. Teachers often lead chants, too.

Loosely translated, **Anusara** means "go with the flow and to follow with your heart." The aim of Anusara is to free emotions through precise, proper alignment in various poses. Because the poses are believed to be emotionally oriented, they are expressed from the inside out. Classes in this uplifting yoga can feel more like dance than yoga sessions.

Integral. Sri Swami Satchidananda believed that by incorporating yoga into all aspects of life, our world would become a more harmonious place. Aptly named for its inclusion of Raja, Japa, Hatha and Karma yoga, Integral is practiced much like a meditation. Practitioners of this holistic yoga feel as if they are unfolding from within. A typical class includes Hatha postures, relaxation between asanas and chanting.

Ananda yoga is first and foremost a spiritual yoga. Ananda is a gentle Hatha practice in which silent affirmations are used when holding the various poses, thereby revealing the healing subtleties of those poses. Powerful yet nurturing, Ananda's primary function is to help prepare the body and mind for meditation.

Kripalu. Often called the yoga of compassionate awareness, Kripalu teaches how to respond in the moment to anything, rather than fall back on habitual reactions. Classes consist of stretching exercises, formal postures, and instruction in relaxation and breathing. **Y**