

Yoga for the Mind

Our approach towards our self and our lives is determined by our state of mind and our thoughts. Yoga gives us the tools to change our mind and therefore to have a better quality of health, life and wellbeing. To ensure that each personality type, age and situation can find benefit, yoga has a vast range of tools at its disposal. We don't need to practise them all, but can choose the tools that work for us at different times and stages of life. A little regular practice each day will transform our minds, making life flow more easily and bringing greater peace and contentment.

Asana - perhaps the most well-known form of yoga in the Western world. Some simple movements with the body practised with awareness and in coordination with the breath can help to keep our physical body functioning to the best of its capacity. Moreover, the practice of asana gives a focus for the mind.

Pranayama - working with classical breath practices such as *nadi shodhana* (alternate nostril breathing) or *bhramari* (humming bee breath) or just watching the natural flow of breath, slows our thought processes and enables us to find peace and stillness, a welcome relief from the busyness of daily life.

Shatkarmas - cleansing practices such as *jala neti* (cleaning the nostrils with salt water) help to clear the nasal passageways, relieve headaches, remove mental confusion to bring increased clarity of mind.

Yoga Nidra - deep relaxation gives us time to rest completely without using the widely used props of social media, watching films and so forth.

Yama and Niyama - the codes of personal disciplines and social conduct such as developing simplicity, contentment and cleanliness. When we focus on one or more of these in our daily life we develop the positive aspects inner personality which help us to feel more at one with ourselves and others.

Meditation - sitting quietly for even 10 minutes each day either with a classical meditation practice, such as *antar mouna* or *ajapa japa*, or focusing on the breath or mantra gives clarity of mind. This helps us to find inner stillness and to connect with our true, inner and peaceful nature. Time spent reflecting on how we have responded to people and situations in the day can help us to change our unhelpful attitudes and behaviours. In this way, we gradually change our behaviour patterns so that we are more joyful and content.

Chanting - regularly chanting or mentally repeating a mantra gives the mind a focal point and a much needed rest from the constantly chattering and fluctuating thoughts. The soothing sound vibrations create a sense of calm within each cell of our being.

I've taken the above from an article by the Mandala Yoga Ashram in Wales. Often I am asked how to develop a regular practice or what to do as part of a daily practice, and it can be tricky, but if we think of the above and just get on the mat it will come!

When I first came to yoga I was looking for something but had no idea what. Something needed to change in life...and I realised once I found the right teacher that it was me that needed to change...but I had no idea how or what. Just by being in a yoga class with Sylvia and listening to her and sitting with myself...it evolved...the changes came as I sat with myself and listened to myself with an open and quiet heart.

I hope this helps you in some way.

Happy to chat anytime.

Phillipa Nov 2020.