

Why Should You Do Yoga

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Yoga is a holistic system that incorporates the mind body connection. It works with your breathing habits, concentration skills and the ability to focus on the present. This system is important for all people and especially for the competitive athlete. This gives the athlete the edge.

The philosophy of yoga is that you cannot obtain control of the body without the control of the mind. Yoga combines and integrates the mind body connection.

Physiologically, yoga practice will stimulate performance of the Central Nervous System (CNS). The autonomic nervous system composes of two parts, the sympathetic and parasympathetic. The latter is the one that gets activated with yoga practice. This is characterized by decrease in oxygen consumption, cardiac output, breath rate, and metabolic rate.¹ The sympathetic system has the opposite characteristics. It is your "Fight or Flight," mechanism. When you get angry and upset this is the system that gets activated. This enhancement of the CNS will increase mind-body coordination, faster reaction, more effective interaction with the environment, increased intelligence, increased ability and decreased anxiety. Psychological investigations suggest that yoga improves mood, reduces anxiety, and develops will power, which helps eliminate psychological barriers.²

Yoga postures are similar to active myofascial release. These postures, or asanas, help develop flexibility. In addition, they help balance, proprioception (your joints know where they are in any given movement), and coordination. This is extremely important for any athlete because athletic activities are based on the foundation of our feet, hips, and most important our pelvis which is the foundation of our spine.

Many diseases are linked to a crooked spine. If the spine is not straight, energy from the brain is distorted by pressure applied on the nerves from the associated spinal-vertebral structures. With yoga postures, the spinal column and the spinal cord functions in its normal manner.³

Experiments have shown that illness causes the spine to become misalign, and subluxation complexes ensue (A subluxation is a misalignment of the vertebral bones of the spine that irritates a spinal nerve). The complex is associated with abnormal motion or position of the spinal bones, abnormal nervous system function, abnormal function of the soft tissue, and malfunction of the spinal joints. Thus, misalign vertebrae can irritate nerves as they emerge from the spinal column and impinge the flow of nerve impulses. Asanas and Chiropractic prevent this by straightening the spinal column. In addition, Asanas and Chiropractic help realign the spinal column and encourage the blood flow to nourish the spinal cord and associated nerve plexus.

Yoga is extremely important factor of obtaining optimal levels of health. It detoxifies your body from all of the toxins we are exposed to in the environment and our food. Scientific investigations concluded yoga improves mind over-body coordination by increasing physical tone and awareness while improving mind and breath control which are necessary components for peak performance of the body.

¹ Pasek T. Romanowski W, Vinekor. Studies on Physiological and Psychological Evaluation of the Yoga System. Poland. Wych Fiz Sport 1969; 3:139-141.

² Krueger K. Winning Ways. The Neuro Psycholgy of Sports Excellence. Los Angeles: The Institute of Sports Psychology Workshops, 1988.

³ Saraswati SS. The Effects of Yoga on Hypertension: Meditation Pranayama and Hatha Yoga. Munger, India: Bihar School of Yoga 1984: 97-115

