

MINDFUL YOGA

Many of us are reluctant to exercise because it involves discomfort or strain, or requires special equipment or others to work out with, or going to a special place to do it. If this has been the case for you then mindful hatha yoga may be just the practice you have been waiting for.

The work "yoga" means "yoke" in Sanskrit, and implies a harnessing together and a unifying of body and mind. Yoga is a form of meditation, and when done regularly, is an excellent mind/body discipline for people who wish to move towards greater levels of health.

Hatha yoga consists of postures done mindfully and with awareness of breathing. They are easily learned and have dramatic effects if practiced regularly. The ones we are doing are extremely gentle. Regular practice will increase your muscular-skeletal flexibility, strength, and balance, as well as help you to enter states of deep relaxation and awareness. Many people experience a greater serenity about life in general, improved circulation, a firmer, trimmer figure and less illness as a result.

In practicing yoga, you are advised to practice in the same way that you do when meditating, namely maintaining moment to moment awareness, and not striving to get somewhere, just allowing yourself to be as you are, and letting go of any judging of yourself. Move slowly and consciously. Mindful yoga involves exploring your limits but not pushing beyond them. Instead, you play with dwelling at the boundary and breathing. This requires honoring your body and the "messages" it give you about when to stop and when to avoid doing a posture because of your particular condition.

Yoga requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere. You can learn it from the tape and then go on to invent your own postures, and get other ideas from yoga books or from classes. It is fun to do it to slow music! Experiment mindfully.

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