

# YOGA MONTH

In 2008, the Department of Health and Wellness officially designated September as National Yoga Month. This annual observance is a great opportunity to raise awareness and educate Americans about the health benefits associated with yoga.

Harvard Health Publishing points out that there are many different types of yoga. While challenging yourself by pushing the boundaries of your body's strength and flexibility (while also controlling your breath) will feel amazing at the time, the rewards extend far beyond the mat. Citing research, Harvard stated that regular yoga practice is associated with:

- Better body image
- Mindful eating
- Boosts in weight loss and maintenance
- Enhanced fitness
- Cardiovascular benefits

Let's face it, life has been chaotic. Our world has been a literal rollercoaster for the last couple of years. Many of us are not getting enough rest, and studies have shown that yoga can also help you get a good night's sleep. Maybe that's because it's an excellent tool for reducing stress. No wonder the Department of Health and Wellness wanted us to celebrate it!

If you're still not sold on yoga being for you, or really for EVERY BODY, check out this article from CNN: How yoga helps NFL pro bowler Mike Daniels. It might be surprising to people who think of football players training only in the weight room or on the field, but yoga has been a mainstay in the National Football League for quite some time.

## Getting Started

### What is the Purpose of Yoga and it's Benefits?

The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj," which means "to yoke" or "to join." Yoking, or bringing two animals together, in effect creates a union between the two. Yoga often refers to this idea of a union between mind and body. Yoga has roots as a spiritual practice that focuses on this harmony and has evolved over time with different schools and teachings. Today, many people practice yoga for a number of different reasons, both spiritual and physical. Among them: to help build strength, balance and flexibility; to improve general wellness; or to cope with stress.

### Who Can Practice Yoga?

Anyone can practice yoga. You don't have to have a certain fitness level or fancy clothing to learn or participate. Despite common perceptions and images associated with modern-day yoga, you don't need to be flexible or have a certain body type to practice.

### How Do I Learn Yoga?

You can learn by taking any of our yoga classes here at the Club. Gentle yoga may be a great place to start- but any of the instructors can offer modifications if needed. Additionally, you can start by practicing at home, or using our Fitness on Demand option in the mind/body studio.

### What Do I Need to Get Before I Start Yoga?

There's nothing special you'll need to get started other than some comfy clothes. We have mats available in the mind/body studio for use. Consider investing in your own once you know you'll stick with your new practice.

### What Can I Expect From a Yoga Class?

If you're new to yoga, check with your doctor before starting a new physical routine. It's also a good idea to check in with the instructor at the beginning of class and inform them of any ongoing physical issues you may have. Most classes are an hour or an hour-and-a-half long and involve mental focus, breathing techniques and a series of poses. What you shouldn't find is a competitive or intimidating environment—yoga is especially welcoming to newcomers.

There are many styles of yoga and instructors with differing approaches. Yoga is in part meant to be a mental and physical challenge. If you struggle in a class, don't give up. There are many different styles and approaches to practicing yoga, so consider trying different classes or instructors until you find one that resonates with you.

### What if I Can't Keep Up With the Rest of the Class?

One of the beauties of yoga is that it is utterly non-competitive. Your instructor will encourage you to challenge yourself, but always remember to listen to your own body and only do what you feel is right for you.

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