

Yoga & Stress

New Yorkers Should Make Time in Their Busy Schedules to Slow Down & Exercise Right

By Donna Barnes
Special to New York Resident

No matter what social status a person achieves in the Big Apple, no one is immune to the stress of daily life. However, many health-conscious New Yorkers know that yoga is an excellent antidote.

You've probably taken some classes at your local gym. But have you experienced all the different kinds of yoga? And are you aware of the important nutritional connection?

What you eat affects how you cope with stress, but regular yoga sessions and smart food choices can enhance your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, not to mention that poor nutrition can slow down your progress in yoga.

By combining digestive asanas (yogic postures), cleansing techniques, herbs, and supplements with the basic principle of eating smaller quantities of high-quality food, you can attain a higher self.

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts promote the body's life force without producing toxins, if there's a strong emphasis on eating slowly. If you eat too quickly, even nutritious food won't be properly digested.

Yogis include two fruits and/or vegetables at every meal, eat mini-meals all day long instead of large meals, and believe the greater portion of our food should be eaten raw — because most of the life force is lost in cooking.

True yogis never touch caffeine or alcohol. They say that alcohol lowers the vibrations of the inner body, which defeats yoga's purpose. And they counsel that meat lowers your body's life force and should be eaten in moderation.

Kundalini is the original yoga that inspired all types of yoga practiced today. By strengthening the central nervous system and promoting a healthy glandular system, you awaken the powerful Kundalini energy flowing through your spine.

Many people experience a natural euphoria through the combinations of poses with breath control, meditation, stretching, and chanting. And Kundalini yoga is beneficial in dealing with addictions because it focuses on healing and purifying the mind, body, and emotions.

Hatha is the most popular yoga practiced by Westerners today. But a different version is all the rage. Started by Bikram Choudhury, who began training in India when he was just four years old, Bikram classes consist of 26 poses done in a very specific order.

In a room usually heated to around 105° F. but sometimes to 115, you'll begin with stretches designed to warm

up your muscles, ligaments, and tendons to prepare you for the very physical poses that will follow.

It's an intense workout that, combined with the heat, can be tough. Just adjusting to breathing in a hot room for 90 minutes is challenging. You should wear light clothes and bring a large towel and a big bottle of water.

This style is recommended for veterans of yoga or extremely fit individuals. It's said to move fresh, oxygenated blood to 100 percent of your body, to



Stress Buster: Naked's Barracuda Barnes

each organ and through every fiber, restoring all systems to healthy working order. It's also said to be excellent for removing chronic body pain and symptoms of disease.

And finally, I have to mention how significant yoga for children is. Possessing all the same therapeutic benefits that it holds for adults, when practiced by children, yoga can improve concentration and reduce hyperactivity.

Yoga experts say that it can help children with many learning disabilities, including autism, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and Attention Deficit Disorder. To its practitioners, though yoga is not an immediate cure, it is much longer lasting. The results become apparent gradually through a type of learning that transforms the entire person.

That's the difference between yoga and conventional Western medicine. There's no learning or transformation taking place when you swallow a pill. ■

You may see more of Donna Barnes weekdays on MetroTV as cohort of Naked New York (metro.tv). For those who want to give yoga a try, check Barnes out in Barracuda Yoga, available at barracudayoga.com.

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If you are interested, or know of a friend or relative who might be interested in participating, please contact:

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