



body and soul

ANCIENT PRACTICE ARE BEING CELEBRATED THIS WEEK



NEIL PATEL

If you are too stressed to even think about yoga, then you need it the most. Unless you can afford a vacation every month, you need an effective strategy. Years of stress can take a toll on your body and relationships. Neil Patel, founder and grandmaster of Chi Kri Yoga, learnt this from his own experience of battling cancer. He claims that yoga and meditation helped him overcome the stressful and angry patterns in his life.

Why are so many of us stressed and angry, when we live so well?

Pressure. There is an unhealthy pressure to exceed financially and socially, at the expense of one's peace and spiritual development. This leads to a person losing their anchor, grounding and balance within themselves. Once the connection to our internal peace is lost, there is a corresponding loss of wisdom. When ignorance takes the place of wisdom, the result is anger.

Can yoga really help to reduce stress?

Yoga can connect you back to what really matters in life – the soul within – and it's five unconditional personalities – love, peace, bliss, energy and wisdom. Once a person is in tune with their own inner frequency, they are satisfied from within. This leads to less desperation, less of a driven desire for satisfaction from the external world, or less attachment, which reduces stress.

What makes yoga a more powerful stress buster compared to other methods?

The yogi just needs his or her own mind, breath and body, to control stress. Calming the breath calms the mind, nerves and cells, and the same method works if any of those areas are calmed – they calm the others down too. Yoga is uniquely powerful in this way. It is mutually beneficial to the entire body.

So what can we do each day to prevent building up stress?

Get into the unbreakable habit of spending 15 minutes before breakfast every morning to meditate or do *pranayama*. In this time, the mind can be relaxed, tuned into the soul, and all thoughts of stress can be eradicated. Tree pose is an excellent *asana* for managing stress and anger.



SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

If you are someone who struggles with weight, you have probably only considered using diet and exercise to get results. Of course these help, but contrary to popular thought, you are more than what you eat. According to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, spiritual leader and founder of the Art of Living Foundation, we have to go beyond the surface.

Why do so many of us struggle with managing our weight?

We do not have a balanced lifestyle, a balance between activity, rest and exercise. We do not eat in a balanced manner and we seldom attend to our stress levels.

What makes yoga so effective in managing weight and health compared to other types of physical activities?

Yoga is powerful because it works on the deeper levels of our existence, not just superficially; uniting the body, breath and mind in a rhythm. It caters to all five dimensions of our life – social, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Yoga brings us much-needed patience, endurance and skill in action. It also helps us to maintain poise and equanimity in adverse situations, acting as a shock absorber for the stresses and strains of day-to-day life. Yoga can make one flexible, improve one's digestion and help one's metabolic activity.

How can we use yoga to end weight struggles?

These days we sit a lot either at the office, in the car or on the couch watching television or using the computer constantly. We need to stretch our spine. The cobra pose (*Bhujangasana*), the bow pose (*Dhanurasana*), and triangle pose (*Trikonasana*) definitely help. One must also practice breathing techniques or *pranayamas*, followed by 20 minutes of meditation.

Anjali Kusre is hosting the free UN International Yoga Day event at Alexandra Palace in London on Sunday (21). Visit www.iyd.yoga for details.

Priya Mulji



Follow Priya Mulji on www.twitter.com/priyamulji or log onto www.priyamulji.com

Out-growing people

WE MEET people, make friends and share with them this thing we call the journey of life. But what happens when two people, perhaps a friend or partner, are moving in opposite directions or drifting apart?

My life hasn't been the same, especially since I moved to London. As a desi, you're expected to take a path that consists of going to university, getting a good job, getting married and having children. I did, in fact, follow that path up until the getting a job part, but after that I followed my own ambitions and moved to the big smoke. However, many other people I know followed the more traditional path and I have recently begun to wonder if they are meant to be in our lives. Have we simply out-grown them?

There are two types of people in the world – the ones who follow the traditional path and those who take a different course. That is not to say one is better than the other, because I'm sure the majority of us want to settle down, start a family and have that two point four children dynamic. But the thing is, that isn't in everyone's destiny.

As we grow up, we change and that's a fact, whether as a person, life circumstances or even financially. Someone said to me that once they got married they didn't need any friends, because they did everything with their husbands. Then there are others who keep living their lives – socialising with friends, pursuing hobbies yet still having a very healthy and happily married life.

Over the last five-10 years, I have made a complete different set of friends, some single and some not. I think it is really important to have groups of people in your life whom you can relate to for different things. For example, I am single and really treasure my single friends. It's with them I can go to singles events and talk about dates. Not that I can't with my married friends, but there is a better understanding with singles and we can share dating experiences or give each other advice. In the same way, I'm really glad my friends who are married with kids have friends or family members they can share parenthood tips with.

Ultimately, having new friends doesn't mean we don't value old friends or love them, it plainly is because we've moved in a different direction and it is nothing you should be sad about. Just because I'm single and they are married doesn't mean they are not my friend any more, we have just moved in different directions. In fact, you should embrace people from different walks of life. A wise person once said, 'good friends are hard to find, harder to leave and impossible to forget.'

