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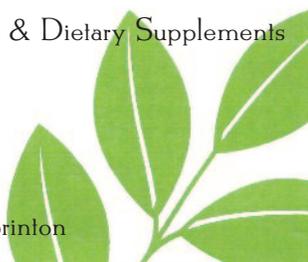
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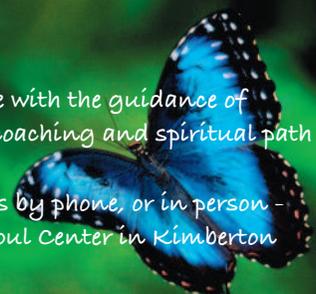
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Triangle Pose

From your standing posture, open your legs into a wide stance and raise your arms to shoulder height, allowing your shoulder blades to drop down your back. Turn your right foot out to 90-degrees and your left foot in about 45-degrees. Inhale deeply, allowing both sides of your torso to evenly expand. Exhale and lengthen your right side over your right leg, allowing your right hand to rest on your ankle or on the

inside of your calf, while your left hand reaches strongly toward the ceiling. Expand your chest and ribs with each inhalation, and enjoy a release in the hips and waist with each exhalation. Stay for up to 10 complete breaths. Inhale and reach up with the left hand to bring yourself out of the posture, center your spine, turn your feet in the opposite direction and repeat on your left side.

Lunge with Backbend

From your Triangle stance, lower your arms and turn your hips and torso to face your left foot. Bend your left knee and bring your hands to the floor on either side of your foot, dropping your right knee to the floor for a lunge. Inhale and lift your torso over your hips. Allow your hips to open and sink deeper with an exhalation.



Maintain for up to 10 breaths. For a fuller expression of the lunge, reach your right hand back to your right calf or ankle while your left arm reaches overhead to open the ribs and chest. Breathe deeply and explore which places in your body open on inhalation, and release on exhalation. Repeat on the opposite side.



Cobra Pose

Lie on your stomach with your chin on the floor and your hands directly below your shoulders, fingers pointing forward.

Inhale and inflate your spine forward and up, lifting your chest with your back muscles, using your arms only for gentle support. Drop your shoulders away from your ears while keeping your elbows in, tight against your ribs. Maintain the posture for up to 10 deep breaths into the chest and ribs, and then release back to the starting point on an exhalation.

Seated Forward Fold

Come to a seated posture with your legs extended in front of you. Inhale, raising your arms overhead and lengthening your spine upward. Exhale, folding



forward from your waist, over your legs. Breathe deeply into your back for up to 10 breaths. On an inhalation, inflate your spine forward and up to return to your starting point.



Reclining Twist

Lie on your back, drawing your knees into your chest on an exhalation. On your next

inhalation lengthen your left arm overhead by your ear, expanding your left ribs with your breath. Exhale, dropping your legs to your right side into a twist. Breathe deeply and relax into the pose with each exhalation, imagining your body's energy spiraling down to the base of your spine. Stay for up to 10 breaths and repeat on the other side.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Alternate nostril breathing balances the energy channels that run along the right and left sides of the spine (nadis) develops conscious control of the breath cycle, and balances the nervous system.



Most people find that one nostril is more open than the other and that it may even be difficult to breath through one side. This is normal. The two channels continually switch their dominance throughout the course of normal, daily activity. In your practice of Alternate Nostril Breathing, have the intention of becoming sensitive to the balance of energy and the flow of prana between your right and left breath/energy channels. If you experience any blockages to the fluid, steady, and slow movement of the inhalation and exhalation, consciously try to smooth out any "bumps" along the way. Receive internal balance from this practice.

- Sit comfortably in a cross-legged posture with your back straight and your head relaxed on top of your spine. (You can sit with your back against a wall for support and comfort.)
- Place your right index and middle fingers in your right palm with the thumb, ring, and pinky fingers extended.
- Inhale deeply through both nostrils. Then, closing your right nostril with your right thumb, slowly exhale through the left nostril.
- Keeping the right nostril closed, inhale slowly through the left.
- Close the left nostril with the ring and pinky fingers, open the right nostril, and slowly exhale.
- After full exhalation, slowly inhale again through the right side.
- Close the right side with the thumb, open the left side, and exhale slowly.
- Repeat for several rounds (up to ten), concentrating on maintaining an even count of both inhalation and exhalation as you alternate the nostrils.
- After your final breath cycle, remove your hand and take several deep breaths through both nostrils. Observe a feeling of balance in your breathing. ▲

Article excerpted from *The Musician's Breath* by James Jordan, Mark Moliterno, and Nova Thomas © 2011 GIA Publications, Inc.



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From Lethargy to Tranquility – Understanding the Energy Cycles of Yoga

THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING RELAXED AND BEING LAZY, and understanding the philosophy of the three Gunas, or three energy cycles of yoga, can help you avoid lethargy and energy depletion, and experience more tranquil moments in your life.

The three energy cycles are:

1. Lethargic/Degenerative (tamas)
2. Energetic/Erratic (rajas)
3. Tranquil/Stable (sattva)

For simplification these will be referred to as lethargy, energy and tranquility in this article.

In nature, the lethargic state can be represented by a quagmire or swamp, the energetic state can be represented by a river raging in a ravine, and the tranquil state can be represented by a deep and peaceful lake.

Our bodies, minds and emotions go through these cycles as well.

We feel lethargic when we have eaten too much or chosen energy draining foods, slept for too long, have not moved enough, and aren't motivated to do much with our life.

We feel energetic when we exercise a lot, motivate ourselves with material desires such as money, fame and power, and eat spicy foods, to name a few, but this state can also become very unfocused, anxious and erratic if the energy is undisciplined and undirected.

We feel tranquil when we meditate, relax, contemplate, produce with non-attachment, do all things in moderation and harmoniously co-exist with all living beings.

It is evident by these short descriptions that most people would prefer the tranquil state to the other two. Yoga ideology is however aware of the cyclical nature of these energies. While the philosophy advises the yogi to gravitate towards the tranquil state and stay away from the lethargic state as much as possible, it also acknowledges that it is near impossible to steer clear of the lethargy all together.

Raise your energy level first – then become tranquil

According to yoga it is impossible to go from lethargy to tranquility, without passing through an energetic state first. In essence, you cannot get up off your lazy butt and start meditating straight away, because then the meditation is likely to turn into laziness again! You first need to get up and get your energy flowing with physical exercise or mental motivation before you can sit down and experience calmness.

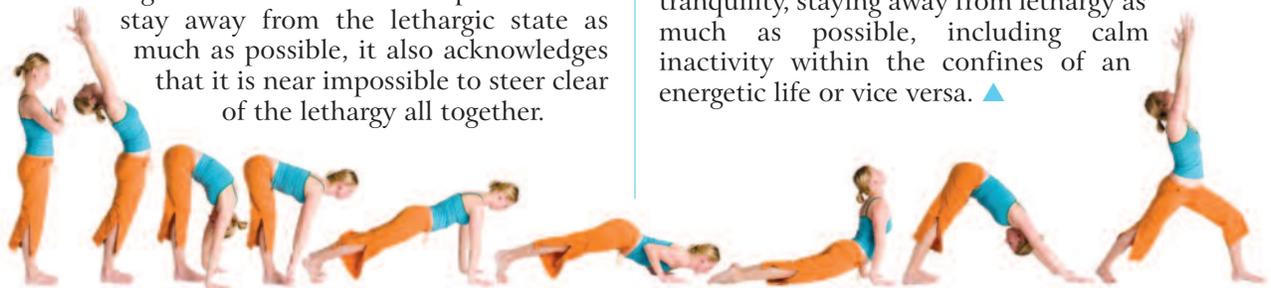
Find strength in the calm

Motivational seminars mostly seem to revolve around getting people from a state of lethargy and into a state of energy and enthusiasm. While this is a very important transition that most of us need to master during our lifetime, yogis maintain that the tranquil state is the most beneficial for human growth and harmony. It has all the depth and energy of the energetic state but also brings with it stability, equilibrium and peace of mind. Imagine being able to make your life decisions from a calm place instead of always having to pump yourself into a state of passion. There is great strength in the deep calm and if you learn to flow with the energy cycles and master the state changes you will eventually find yourself drawn to the calmness as your center of energy gravity.

Beware! Tranquility can turn back into lethargy

Stay in the calm and relaxed state for too long and you may become lazy again. Just as it may feel calming and rejuvenating to step into a hot tub or hot bath for a few minutes, staying in there too long will drain your energy and eventually bring about a feeling of heaviness and lethargy. Only well trained practitioners can meditate for hours without getting sleepy, so choose a timeframe when practicing meditation that brings you into the calm state, but does not tip you over into lethargy.

Once you understand this energy cycle, the idea is simply to balance the energies of lethargy, energy and tranquility, staying away from lethargy as much as possible, including calm inactivity within the confines of an energetic life or vice versa. ▲



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Serious inquirers only, please. Contact Scott Rosen - Founder, Transformations Holistic Learning Center at 856-816-3812 or scott.rosen@rosengroup.com. Based on a preliminary conversation and signing of a Non Disclosure agreement I will be happy to send a more detailed information package about the opportunity.

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Eco Yogis: One with the Earth

Mata Bhumi Putroham Prithivyah
Earth is my mother, I am her son.

Green is one of the latest buzzwords. People all over the world are talking about sustainability and renewable energy. The promise of a product being eco-friendly is luring us into our grocery stores, car malls and other mega distributors of the human experience. The definition has been so watered down by marketers that many of us are left to wonder what does being Green really mean? It's possible that you could ask this question of many well-educated experts in the field and get very different answers that would depend highly on which type of pedagogic lens they view the concept through.

Although the idea of Green Yoga is newer to the modern yoga culture, Yoga has involved the sacredness of the earth since its inception. The Sages realized the importance of staying connected to our Mother Earth; to protect her from harm for she is the one providing us with clean air, food and water. The Vedic text, Prthivi Sukta (Jainism), states the foundation for a philosophy of interconnectedness between humans and nature. The text is sung as a hymn; Mother Earth is celebrated for all her natural bounties and particularly for her gifts of herbs and vegetation. As our thoughts determine our outlook on life, our interaction with the Earth determines the quality of our life. The text translates that practicing yoga with an intention toward the Earth will heal her in a state of crisis.

When we examine the concept of being "Green" through the lens of Traditional Yoga Philosophy our perspective begins to shift a little bit. Many modern practitioners approach Yoga as a physical or personal discipline and do not look into its ecological relevance. Over time a sense of connectedness begins to develop – first with self and then with others. A clear and personal understanding of the basic Yogic principles of Ahimsa (non-harming), Asteya (non-stealing) and Aparigraha (non-grasping) in combination with a practice of mindful living draws many practitioners to reconnect with the earth and practice green living.

Through awareness and education, there are many ways that we can choose to become an active participant in the process

of Greening the world. Small decisions and efforts can really add up over time. While we could recommend a lot of different ways to green your life, this article will focus on ways to keep our Yoga practice eco-friendly with an eye towards preserving the future of sacred mother earth.

7 Simple Ways to Green Your Yoga Practice

- 1. Consider buying an eco friendly, rubber or PVC free mat.** We recommend:

Jade Yoga is PA based company dedicated to making high performance environmentally friendly yoga mats, made from natural rubber (a renewable resource). In addition to being local, for every mat they sell, they plant a tree! www.jadeyoga.com

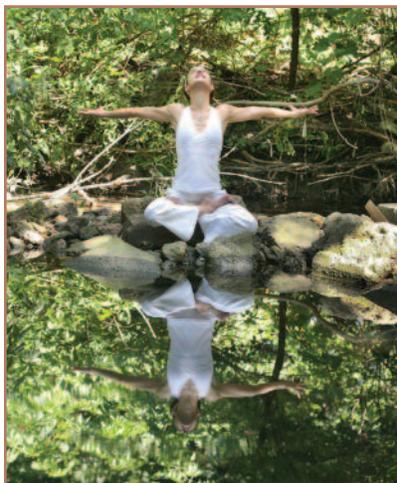
Manduka eKO Mat is a durable yoga mat made with a proprietary closed-cell natural rubber and a toxic-free softening process that is completely free of foaming agents and plasticizers. www.manduka.com

- 2. Recycle Old Yoga Mats**

Ever wondered what to do with your old yoga mat? So did Stephanie Stano, then she wondered what was happening to all the old yoga mats of people in her yoga classes and in yoga classes around the world. Her answer? Create a company that makes it easy for practitioners, studio owners and fitness centers to recycle and upcycle mats. Send it, drop it off or schedule a pick-up and your mat will become a new product or be reused by organizations that request yoga mats by donation. Plus once your mat is received, they'll email you get a coupon for 20% off your next order of Manduka gear, which will come in handy for one of the mats we recommended above! www.recycleyourmat.com

- 3. Bring your reusable (BPA free) water bottle to yoga class (and everywhere else too!)** We recommend:

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continued on page 26



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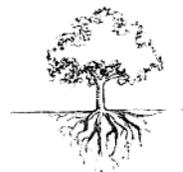
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Penny Kulp grew up in Chester Springs, PA, in a caring family environment. After a short time in business, her concern for others led her into a career as a Massage Therapist.

A graduate of Episcopal Academy and Gettysburg College, Penny completed her professional training at the Pennsylvania School of Muscle Therapy in 1998. She started practicing at her current location in June of 1999, and has since gained the respect of many clients.

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4. Favor local retreats and trainings over ones that require long distance travel. Or if you must travel for a retreat, consider staying at an eco-friendly, sustainable resort/hotel.

Staying local? Within driving distance, we recommend:

The Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health: a non-profit health and yoga retreat facility in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. With a wide variety of programs for the spiritual seeker to choose from, Kripalu is North America's largest residential facility for holistic health and education. It's new annex won the 2010 Housing Award for Specialized Housing because of the specialized climate control systems that consume 40 percent less energy than conventional heating and cooling systems. The food is tasty, organic and locally sourced as often as possible. www.kripalu.org.

Want to Volunteer?

Check out Eco Yoga Villages, a non-profit organization of yoga monasteries with ecological farms and community education programs in South America and India. Yogis live in harmony with locals and work together to accomplish the same goals of learning about recycling, yoga, vegetarian food, agriculture and more! <http://ecological-farms.blogspot.com/>

Need a Get-Away Retreat?

Yatra Yoga International: founded in 2008, in response to the growing demand of yoga travelers worldwide, this company's mission is to help provide a deeper yoga experience to travelers that incorporate healthful organic food and lush surroundings. They are committed to sustainable practices in the selection of their locations, accommodations, and service providers and give back to the places they visit. www.yogaretreat-international.com/

5. Make your home practice space eco friendly.

- Replace chemical based cleaning products with natural ones
- Use energy conserving light bulbs
- Air out the house on warmer sunny days

6. Practice outside as often as you can.

- At the beginning of practice, set an Intention to honor Mother Earth. Offer gratitude and thanks for her abundance of gifts.
- Utilize poses in your practice that embody the essence of animal and natural energy like tree, eagle, fish, lion, frog, cat/dog.
- While practicing, bring the energy of the Earth (downward, grounding energy) into your standing poses. Let your inhalations lift you up with sky energy and exhalations surrender down with earth energy.
- Explore the energy of the elements in your yoga practice. Play with the concepts of air, earth, water, fire and ether within your pose flows.

7. Learn more about the Green Yoga Movement

The Green Yoga Association exists to support activist-yogis and yogi-activists around the world. They hold Green Yoga Conferences, publish informative newsletters and blog posts, campaign to eliminate PVC and harmful chemicals from Yoga products, support Yoga studios and businesses who wish to go green and participate in community events, with the hopes of inspiring others to practice Green Yoga. www.greenyoga.org

Traditional Yoga Studies, in addition to being the home of the book Green Yoga by Georg & Brenda Feuerstein, this website offers a wealth of free articles on the spiritual principles that define & support the Green Yoga movement, often from both a Yogic and Buddhist perspective. www.traditionalyogastudies.com

The Yoga & Ecology certificate program at Loyola Marymount University seeks to cultivate an appreciation for, and conscious connection with, the natural environments in which we live while educating students on the ecological and ethical principles that underlie Yoga philosophy. Designed for yoga teachers and serious yoga students, it includes courses like Green Yoga Sadhana and Foundations of Yoga and Ecology. We know, it's only being offered in California right now, but with enough interest the program could be offered as an online option someday! www.lmu.edu/academics/extension/crs/certificates/yoga_green.htm ▲



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Carol Bowman, MS, past life regression therapist for fifteen years, is the internationally-known lecturer and author of *Children's Past Lives* and *Return From Heaven*.

Carol has been featured on national TV and radio including *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, *The Art Bell Show*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, *ABC Primetime* and as reincarnation expert on *A&E* and *The Discovery Channel*.

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An Interview with Paul Grilley

What initially brought you to Yoga? Tell us a little bit about your discovery process.

I dropped out of university in spring of 1979; I just couldn't find my place in the standard academic curriculum. My interests were esoteric yet I admired science. It seemed that people who were interested in esoteric subjects were not critical thinkers or even worse, just fanatics. And yet the critical thinking scientists were blocked by an irreligious, almost sneering disdain for anything not in a test tube.

In an attempt to continue my education as best I could I approached a chiropractor in my hometown of Columbia Falls, Montana and asked if he had any recommendations for books on subjects like hypnotism, ESP, power of mind, and the human aura. I had approached him because a "chiropractor" was about all there was in terms of "alternative methodologies" at that time. He recommended some Theosophical authors and *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. Well, I was so swept away by Yogananda's autobiography that I didn't bother with any of the others!

Previous to reading Yogananda I had no idea what "mysticism" was, or that there was a long history of it in both the East and the West, or that there were texts that systematically described the methods of how to achieve such a state. I was only 20 at the time and felt that an entire piece of human history, the most important piece of human history, had been kept hidden from me. My reaction was part indignation, part adolescent excitement about being in on the secret and part elation about the reconciliation between esoteric aspirations and scientific objectivity. I became hooked on Yoga and Indian culture and which led me to investigate Hatha Yoga. I studied books and took classes in town. I then moved to Los Angeles to study yoga and take classes in kinesiology at UCLA.

How has your practice evolved over the years?

I started out doing gentle yoga from a book, then practiced and taught Bikram Yoga for three years, then I studied Ashtanga Yoga with David Williams and about eight years into my practice, in 1988, I met Paulie Zink. Paulie teaches Taoist Yoga and a small portion of his teaching includes what is now called "yin yoga". After eight years of a demanding, athletic practice I was delighted to settle into something slow and nourishing. I appreciate all forms of yoga, yin and yang, but my own personal practice is now predominately yin.

Tell us a little bit about Yin Yoga. Where does it come from and what are some of basic principles of the practice?

Yin yoga is a small part of the Taoist Yoga taught by Paulie Zink. Paulie learned it from his teacher, who learned it from his teacher, etc. So I learned it from someone in a Chinese lineage, not Indian. Ironically, when I first began practicing yoga while living in Montana it was actually a "yin" style but I had abandoned it when I graduated to more "advanced" forms of practice like Bikram and Ashtanga Yoga. I now realize that

"more yang" is not "more advanced" but I was young and strong and confused the distinction. Eight years later, studying with Paulie brought me back to an even deeper appreciation of a yin form of yoga, I will always be grateful to him for that.

You have a unique approach to Yoga Anatomy that offers practical insight into how an individual's bone structure affects their experience of poses. How did you arrive at this approach?

Southern Oregon University is in our home town of Ashland, Oregon and it has a good biology and nursing program. Once while waiting for a friend who was visiting his old anatomy teacher on campus, I discovered a box of femur bones that someone had left out. The bones were dramatically different from one another. Staring at them, a light went on. I had been practicing yoga for 18 years and many postures were still way beyond my abilities. Seeing such differences in the bones gave me the clue as to why I was still limited in certain ranges of motion after all those years of practice.

In your opinion how does awareness of the Chakras and/or Meridians change an individual's experience of practice?

There are many possible levels of awareness in a yoga practice, from crudely physical to witnessing your thought processes. Practicing with an intention to feel the chakras or the meridians calms the mind, makes us quieter and puts us in touch with something more than physical.

Your website offers an incredible slideshow that demonstrates the range of skeletal deviations that one might see in Yoga practitioners. Tell us a little bit about how the slideshow came about.

After discovering the femur bones in the lab at SOU, I wanted to know if such dramatic differences were highly unusual or the norm. So I got on the Internet and found a natural history store in Berkeley, California that had a large supply of human bones. I drove down and visited the shop and learned that no two bones are the same, it seems obvious now but seeing the "hard evidence" finally brought home to me that each human being is unique. Some years later my wife Suzee and I, our good friend Denise Kaufman and photographer Joe Dully visited a museum and made comparative images of many major bones of the body.

What suggestions would you offer to a beginning practitioner of yoga to enhance their practice?

Always ask yourself "Where do I feel this pose in my body?" "What am I feeling? Muscle? Bone? Chi?" In other words, always be thinking about the function of a pose; do not be stuck in trying to get into a specific outward shape.

What are some of your favorite books about Yoga and/or Spirituality?

Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda and *Towards a Superconsciousness* by Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama

What guidance would you offer to those who are intimidated by learning Yoga anatomy?

Don't try to learn it only from books. Books are useful once you have a three dimensional grasp of the subject. Check out Dr. Acland's incredible DVD series on anatomy and try to get into a dissection workshop with Gil Hedley. Nothing compares to having experience with a human form. ▲

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THE GUT-BRAIN

WE ARE TAUGHT THAT the digestive system's role is to process food—to break it down, extract the nutrients, and eliminate what is not needed.

Over the last twenty years or so, an equally important, but counter-intuitive role that has been discovered is the gut's influence on the nervous system. Better stated, it is part of the nervous system.

The colloquial phrase, "I have a gut feeling", is actually true—we really do think and feel with our gut. More so, as a second brain, the gut has a say in every function that is "controlled" by the brain—including sleep, hormones, immune system (including resistance to infection, allergy and autoimmune disease), and perceptual and musculoskeletal systems (pain, movement, coordination, etc).

In Chinese Medicine, there are several meridians that "represent" various organs of the gut, including the stomach, small and large intestine, liver and gall bladder. Imbalance of any of these energetic systems correlates with emotional and physiological dysfunction. Likewise Ayurvedic (Indian) medicine uses the addition and deletion of specific foods and herbs to "re-program" the gut, and thereby affect emotional and physical health.

Most people appreciate the effect of the mind on the gut. For example, they will have diarrhea before a stressful exam or presentation, or their bowels will slow down when in a strange place. However, the effect of the gut on the mind is less obvious, but extremely important. Many children and adults are stuck in anxiety, depression or OCD, or have significant cognitive problems with attention or memory, and blame

their brains, genetics, or circumstances, without appreciating the potential for improvement if the gut is considered a part of the root cause. They often will not see long-lasting relief until the gut is examined and treated. Even conventional medicine recognizes a role of the gut in autism¹. Even when there are no obvious gut symptoms the gut can be central to a chronic problem.

Women will also experience the effect of hormones on the gut—often their bowel patterns will speed or slow with phases of their cycle. But just as the hormones affect the gut, the gut affects the hormones.

Many of the medications that are used to "manage" (mask) symptoms of mind dysfunction, such as anti-depressants,

stimulants, sedatives and hormones can affect the gut, making the situation worse in the long-term.

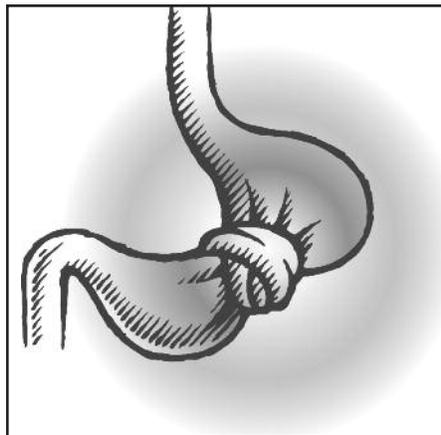
Finally, there is science that helps understand these relationships, and gives validity to working extensively on diet and gut function to affect virtually every function of the body, especially the mind.

BRIEF ANATOMY OF THE GUT

We are a tube within a tube, with the gut representing one long 25+ foot long tube starting at the mouth and ending at the anus. By definition, the contents of this tube are external to the body. The gut works in part as a filter, letting in the good stuff and keeping out the bad stuff.

Within the wall of the intestines, there are two layers of nerve networks—called the "intrinsic plexus". This nervous system has more nerve cells than the spinal cord, and not only controls the function of the gut, but communicates with the "extrinsic" nervous system—the spinal cord, autonomic nervous system and brain (see below). There are also patches of immune cells called Peyer's patches.

The liver, gallbladder, and pancreas are parts of the digestive system, as they help with the processing of virtually all foods. The blood stream of the gut cycles back to the liver for processing.



A BRIEF PHYSIOLOGY OF THE GUT

The process of digestion requires a huge amount of mechanical and biochemical work. Approximately 25% of the body's total energy goes toward digestion. Not to disrespect our mothers, but we are supposed to lose our appetites when sick to divert this energy to healing.

Peristalsis is the process by which muscles in the gut wall propel food along its length. This requires synchrony of the muscles, which is coordinated by the intrinsic and extrinsic nervous systems. Conditions such as gastroparesis and

achalasia occur when the nervous system is damaged and food doesn't move properly along the tube.

The gut lining also secretes several quarts of digestive fluids and lining cells per day; most are later re-absorbed in the large intestine. The quantity and composition of these fluids are again controlled by the intrinsic and extrinsic nervous systems.

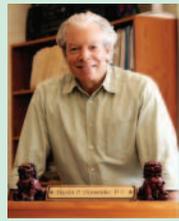
The gut also contains trillions of bacteria and yeast, up to 5 pounds, a farm of up to 400 different organisms, which aid in digestion and in the production of important substances, including vitamins B7 and B12.

At least 50% of the immune system resides within the gut—like farmers—monitoring the population of bacteria

continued on page 32



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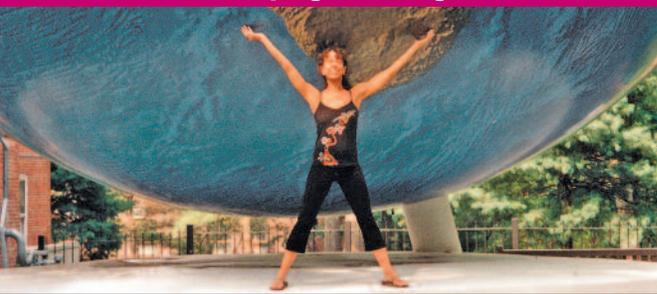
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and yeast, and programming the immune system to react or not react to various critters and compounds.

The liver, pancreas, small intestines and even the stomach also have endocrine functions—they release chemical messengers (hormones) into the bloodstream to affect the entire body.

The liver receives the blood from the intestines and has the job of processing most compounds that come from within and without. When the liver is overwhelmed, a toxic situation can affect mind, often called “fog”².

NEURO-TRANSMITTERS AND NEURO-HORMONES

The way a nerve communicates with other nerves or tissues locally is through the release of chemicals called neuro-transmitters. There are also neuro-hormones that are released into the blood stream. Twenty years ago there were only four or five known neurotransmitters. Now we know of hundreds, if not thousands. These compounds range from very simple molecules such as nitrous oxide to single amino acids to complex molecules such as opiates.

The main neurotransmitter of the gut is serotonin. Serotonin is also the main target of most of the newer antidepressants, beginning with Prozac, also called SSRI’s or “Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors”. They essentially increase the levels of serotonin in the nervous system, which, in select patients, can help with depression, anxiety, PMS, and other mind-body symptoms.

The gut releases serotonin in response to a carbohydrate meal—hence the temporary calming effect of cookies and sweets. Also, the amino acid tryptophan, present in high amounts of milk and turkey, is made into serotonin which is the basis for the calming effect of milk and cookies and thanksgiving dinner.

While we are taught that the mind “resides” within the brain, these new discoveries tell us that “mind” is simply the totality of the functioning of the body—which can be optimal, or for most of us, sub-optimal.

EVALUATION OF THE GUT

Conventional evaluation of gut function is limited. The most common evaluation is endoscopy, when a scope is put in from above or below. This test looks at structure, not function. Sometimes the surface will tell the physician about function, such as when signs of inflammation are present. Also, a biopsy can be taken to look for infection or other cellular pathology.

Holistic medicine offers more functionally oriented tests that can help identify organisms such as yeast, parasites and bacteria, as well as digestive efficiency, inflammation and allergy to foods.

Conventional and non-conventional labs can analyze various secretions, including saliva, gastric contents, and stool. All tests of digestive function are dependent upon timing—time of the day and what has been eaten and when over the last days and even months.

Several authors believe that certain food-based toxins, such as gluten, can persist within the gut for days, weeks or months, which makes evaluation difficult.

Oftentimes, the best way to evaluate gut function is to make a change in diet—by eliminating or adding certain foods and supplements and to monitor the subjective and objective effects of such changes. Again how this is done is critical, must be strategized, and can be sabotaged by just a single exposure (whether intentional or unknown) to certain foods and substances.

Treatment of the Gut

Treatment of the gut can be very simple or very complex. It’s always best to start with the elimination of junk foods and chemicals, and to emphasize organic vegetables and fruits. After this, the use of nuts and seeds, grains, and animal products are based on a host of considerations for which there are umpteen different meal plans, which will be discussed in future articles.

Probiotics, good bacteria and yeast, are critical for proper gut function, and are harmed by antibiotics, chlorine, pesticides, aspirin-like drugs, and other agents. Most of us need to take probiotics on a regular basis².

Pre-biotics, agents that support the growth of healthy bacteria, as well as the integrity of the gut lining are often helpful. Stomach acid production decreases with aging and chronic stress and supplementation can help with a host of functions. Enzymes come in a huge variety and have different purposes. While fermented and raw foods can provide many of these agents, most of us need supplementation on a regular or intermittent basis.

There are specific herbal and nutritional agents that also have specific functions—such as mastic to help with the stomach lining, glutamine for the intestinal lining, and naturally anti-bacterial and anti-yeast agents such as oregano oil, berberine and grapefruit seed extract. These agents should be used strategically because the timing and quantity can have an important effect on outcome.

Yoga, Acupuncture and Ayurveda can affect the gut mechanically as well as energetically and for some patients are essential to achieve a long-lasting healing.

The effect of the gut on the mind has been known since ancient times; modern science is just now beginning to catch up. Using the best of both paradigms can help achieve long-lasting optimal mind function using natural means. ▲

¹ <http://ebm.rsmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/228/6/639>

² See prior articles in Yoga Living on: Leaky Gut, Stomach Acid, Probiotics, Constipation, as well as other topics and holistic health information.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.

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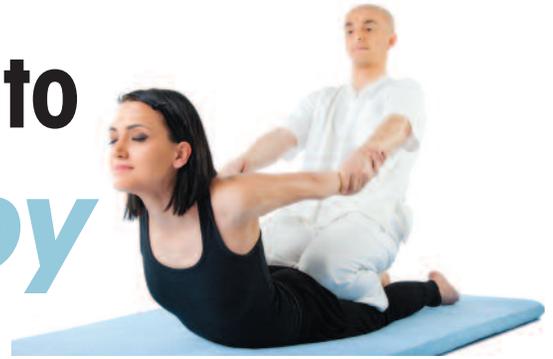


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A Beginners Guide to *Body Therapy*



Seriously? A Massage?

If you're at all like me, you find it hard to justify the time and expense of bodywork. I know. It's crazy. I've been a massage therapist and reflexologist for over ten years, a yoga teacher for almost twenty and I still wrestle with the idea of receiving regular therapeutic massage. How is that possible?

Even though I've been a witness to the power of touch, I understand why we hesitate. First of all, bodywork can be expensive. Do I really deserve to spend all that money on myself – isn't it self-indulgent? And there are a myriad of therapies to choose from. What if I choose the wrong one for my needs? How do I know the difference between Clinical Deep Tissue and Sports Massage? Lomi Lomi, anyone?

Besides, there's no room in my schedule. And what if I clear a few hours on my calendar, spend all that money on myself and then don't connect with my therapist? What if I hate it? What if it's all a big, huge, horrible mistake? What it, what if, what if????

First of all – we need to let go of the 'what ifs'. Making time in our schedule for regular bodywork is not self-indulgent. It's an important part of our personal health and wellness plan.

It's Skin Deep

Skin is our body's largest organ. It is our organ of touch. Among other important duties, it also:

- Cools and warms the body
- Absorbs, protects and eliminates
- Produces Vitamin D

If we want our skin to function optimally, we need to nurture it. The increased blood flow, the warming touch and passive stretching of therapeutic bodywork will rejuvenate the skin.

Actually, It's More than Skin Deep

Regular bodywork is akin to pressing our reset button. We climb onto the massage plinth and then release a long sigh of gratitude with the realization that for the next hour we won't answer a phone. We won't check our emails. While the world will keep spinning at its reckless pace, we won't be part of it. Our world will be still and calm and peaceful.

Now for a Little Science

Meanwhile, pressure receptors under our skin send signals to the vagus nerve deep in the brain. Soothing touch, like the touch we might experience during a therapeutic massage, encourages the vagus nerve to lower our blood pressure

and slow our heart rates. It follows then, that regular massage is a healthy choice for anyone who needs to reduce stress levels. And that's just about everyone, isn't it?

But Wait, There's More

According to the University of Miami's Touch Research Institute human touch:

- Lessens pain
- Improves pulmonary function
- Lowers blood glucose levels

It may even improve immune function. The supportive touch of massage decreases the stress hormone cortisol and increases the release of oxytocin. Oxytocin, sometimes called 'the cuddle hormone' promotes feelings of trust and well-being.

And if That's Not Enough

If being blissed out and stress free isn't enough then what about this: a more clinical approach to body therapy may make us a better version of our already perfect selves. As the muscle fibers are manipulated and stretched, small adhesions are broken, scar tissue is softened, and circulation to the joints is increased. That reduces stiffness and encourages greater flexibility. The discomfort of low-grade chronic pain due to arthritis, sports injury or repetitive strain diminishes.

The Right Therapist

Shawn Jenkins, owner and head therapist at Peak Health Massage located in Devon, PA agrees that word of mouth is a great way to find a great therapist. Ask your friends, fellow yogis, people you trust. Who do they see for body therapy and what modalities work for them? When you begin to hear the same names over and over, you're on the right track. Check out the therapist's website and fill out their contact form. Explain that you're new to therapeutic massage, list any health issues or injuries you may have, and tell them what you hope to gain from massage (i.e. stress relief, improved sleep, reduced chronic pain). Ask questions. There's no need for the third degree, but a few questions will help you understand their philosophical approach to bodywork. Does the therapist take, for instance, a clinical approach or are they more instinctual? Look at their qualifications. A few years of study and experience is probably better than a weekend workshop at Joe Cosmo's School of Rainbow Light. Find out how they handle common conditions – stress, lower back pain, and headache. How they answer these questions will be enough to determine if they are the right therapist for you.

continued on page 65

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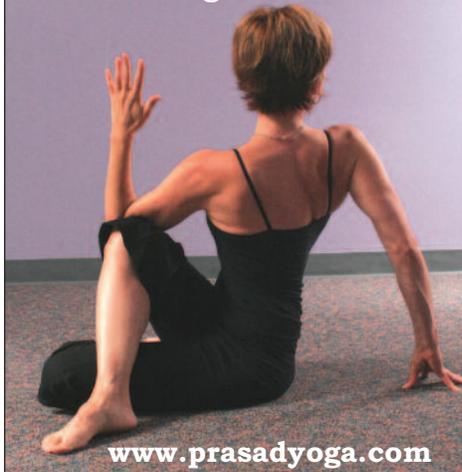
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