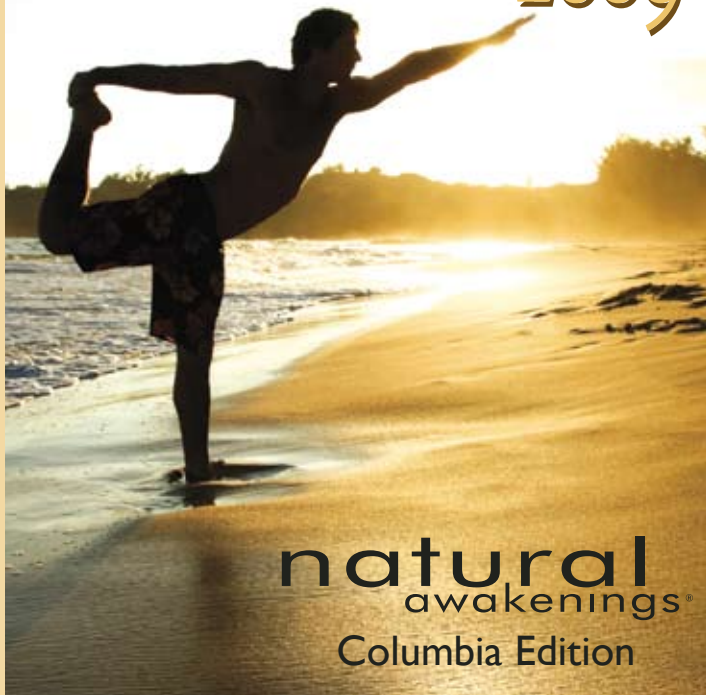


Yoga Directory 2009



natural
awakenings®
Columbia Edition

There's a Yoga Style for Everyone

—EVEN BEGINNERS

No, you don't have to be able to wrap your body into a pretzel shape to reap the benefits of yoga. Yoga is for everyone! It's much more than just flexibility—it's about strength, stamina, concentration, stress reduction, toning the body and organs, increasing vitality, improving circulation and energy flow and more. It's also deeply relaxing, fun, meditative, uplifting and teaches patience. After a while, people will ask how you remain so calm in this stressful world!

Yoga is a Sanskrit word that refers to the integration of physical and mental exercises designed to unite body, mind and spirit. And although there are many styles of yoga, most of the differences concern where the focus is kept: precise alignment of the body, holding of the postures, flow between the postures, breath and movement coordination or inner awareness and meditation. No style is better than another—try several—it's all a matter of what appeals to you. And just as important as style is the relationship that develops between teacher and student.

ANANDA YOGA is a type of gentle Hatha Yoga with an emphasis on meditation. It uses classic yoga postures combined with breathing and silent affirmations to attune oneself with higher levels of body, energy and silent inner awareness. Ananda Yoga is an inner-directed practice and will not appeal to those desiring a more athletic or aerobic experience.

ANUSARA YOGA® is described as "following your heart" or "flowing with Grace." It is a fairly new style of yoga founded in 1997 that is spiritually inspiring yet based on deep knowledge of inner and outer alignment and balanced energetic actions. Each student's abilities and limitations are deeply respected and honored, so this style would be fine for beginners. "Anusara Yoga is based on an uplifting philosophy which looks for the good in all people and all things. Consequently, students of all levels of ability and yoga experience are honored for their unique differences, limitations and talents," according to John Friend, Anusara creator. Like Iyengar yoga, Anusara teachers have to go through several years of training to become certified.

ASHTANGA YOGA has become quite popular in the US. It is physically demanding and constitutes what most would call a "serious workout." Also called "Power Yoga," Ashtanga uses a fast-paced series of flowing poses to build strength, flexibility and stamina. Preferred by many athletes, it is light on meditation; the room is usually heated to warm the muscles and increase flexibility. It is too intense and demanding for beginners.

BIKRAM YOGA, sometimes also called Hot Yoga, will make you sweat with room temperatures of 100 degrees. There are a series of 26 poses, performed in a specific order

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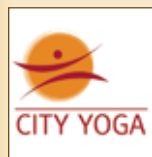
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to warm and stretch muscles, ligaments and tendons. This is a very physically demanding style; the intensity is high and combined with the heated environment, it makes for a very tough workout. Recommended for yoga veterans and very fit individuals.

HATHA YOGA is the discipline on which nearly all yoga styles are based. In Sanskrit, "ha" represents the sun and "tha" represents the moon, hence the yin and yang, light and dark, masculine and feminine aspects and polarities are brought into balance.

INTEGRAL YOGA® is a synthesis of the various branches of Yoga including Hatha Yoga—through asanas (postures), pranayama (breath control), mudras, kriyas, yogic diet and deep relaxation—Raja Yoga—through concentration and meditation—as well as Bhakti, Karma, Jnana and Japa Yoga.

IYENGAR YOGA is noted for precise alignment and symmetry of postures, the development of balance, and the use of props such as blocks, balls and belts. Poses are held longer than usual. It is based on an exceptional understanding of how the body works. Teachers must go through a rigorous, intense training of two to five years before being certified.

KRIPALU YOGA emphasizes breathing and alignment, coordinating breath with movement. It takes the student through three stages, beginning with the practice of postures, then holding the postures longer and developing concentration and inner awareness, and finally creating a meditation in motion where the movement from one posture to another happens unconsciously and spontaneously. Kripalu Yoga is also called the Yoga of Consciousness. Students are encouraged to honor "the wisdom of the body" and to work according to the limits of their flexibility and strength. Beginners can start with stage one.

KUNDALINI YOGA incorporates chanting (mantras), meditation, visualization, breathing and guided relaxation with precise postures. It is designed to activate

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the kundalini energy that runs the length of the spine and has been known to help with addictions and releasing endorphins in the body. Once a guarded secret in India, Kundalini Yoga was first brought to the West in 1969 when tradition was challenged and it began to be taught publicly. A powerful and unique style of yoga, it will not appeal to everyone.

LIFEFORCE YOGA® is a "practice of compassion that creates a big enough container to embrace and accept all the dualities of mood. The practice is adapted to the student, so each individual can move into a balanced emotional, mental and physical state of equanimity and self-awareness," Amy Weintraub.

SIVANANDA YOGA is one of the world's largest schools of yoga. It follows a set structure incorporating the 12 sun salutation postures, and incorporates chanting, meditation and deep relaxation. Students are encouraged to embrace a healthy lifestyle with vegetarian diet, positive thinking and meditation. Supportive for beginners.

VINIYOGA offers a slower more individualized form of yoga emphasizing gentle flow and coordinating breath with movement. Its flowing movement is similar to Ashtanga's much more intense series of poses, but is performed at a much slower and less intense pace. It teaches the student how to apply the yoga tools of poses, chanting, breathing and meditation. Since postures are done with slightly bent knees, Viniyoga is considered excellent for beginners, seniors or those in chronic pain or healing from injury or disease. Function is stressed over form.

VINYASA is a term that covers a broad range of yoga classes. The word Vinyasa means "breath-synchronized movement." In other words, the teacher will instruct you to move from one pose to the next on an inhale or an exhale. This technique is sometimes also called Vinyasa Flow, or just Flow, because of the smooth way that the poses run together and become like a dance. Vinyasa's strength is in its diversity. There is no single philosophy, rulebook or sequence that teachers must follow, so there is a lot of room for individual personalities and quirks to come through. This makes it essential that you find a teacher you enjoy and can relate to. If your first Vinyasa class doesn't rock your world, keep trying different teachers. If you enjoy having things a little loose and unpredictable and like to move, Vinyasa is probably right for you.

There are also several specially tailored yoga programs for prenatal and postpartum pregnancy, mothers and children together, kids, golfers and runners. Restorative Yoga offers healing for mind and body, using props for support. Yoga can still be strenuous, and with special health conditions, injury or pregnancy, checking with your doctor first would be wise, and may even be a requirement for any yoga class. ❀

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