



Yogga for Men

A Workout for the Body, Mind, and Spirit

BRUCE ERIC VAN HORN

Yoga for Men

“When the inspired are provided with information, the result is exciting and enlightening. Read and benefit.”

—Bernie Siegel, M.D.

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Bruce Eric Van Horn

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Preface

In our fast-paced environment many people, particularly men, are under tremendous stress. Stress triggers the fight or flight response, in which toxic chemicals are released. Over time this constant stress reaction can compromise the immune system. Practicing Yoga not only can help improve daily performance of activities and enhance creative problem solving but also has the potential to control escalating health care costs.

Yoga is a form of exercise for the body, mind, and spirit. The ancients produced a perfectly bundled, multitasked, and time-efficient practice that can address all our needs, and modern science is beginning to confirm the validity of their philosophical design. Yoga strengthens the joints without stress, increases lean muscle mass, and enhances flexibility. Yoga can also provide an effective cardiovascular workout as well as improve breathing and metabolism of food and oxygen. Yoga can enhance sexual performance and strengthen orgasm. Yoga has been shown to benefit overall health and functioning of internal organs and tissues.

Yoga also develops discipline and self-confidence. Yoga can help you become more intuitive, creative, and synchronistic. Finally, for students seeking to find meaning in their life, Yoga can transport you to a state of Dharma, where you understand the purpose of your soul's journey and the true nature of the universe.

Most men take better care of their cars than they do themselves. Because they are usually devoted to caring for their families and others, they often fail to address their own health issues and in doing so put their families and themselves at risk.

The majority of men I meet are not using all their personal assets in the pursuit of their careers. Often they are using primarily one hemisphere of their brains, relying on only one of their senses, failing to provide the proper resources for their bodies, and rarely if ever engaging in quiet contemplation to find answers from their higher power. If a business were run this way the management would be quickly replaced. As individuals we don't have to fear such a takeover, unless of course we believe in alien abductions. Most of us do, however, want to realize our full potential, as cocreators of the Universe. The technological world we are building will allow us to increase our creative potential.

Leonardo da Vinci is the perfect example of an individual who realized his full potential. In his pursuit of understanding the mysteries of divine creation, he applied Yogic principles hundreds of years ago. When asked about his success he responded this way:

I understand the Art of Science [right-brain thinking].

I understand the Science of Art [left-brain thinking].

I use all my senses when I create.

I understand my purpose in life.

As a CPA and an MBA I have always lectured my clients on how they must maximize the use of their assets to be competitive. In most companies, especially those in the technology sector, the greatest asset is human capital. However, our current financial accounting models ignore this most important element of a business. The result is that we have not devoted adequate resources to our

employees, and the valuation of our companies has been distorted. Many large corporations are now beginning to devote resources to preventive health programs, such as in-house Yoga classes. *Yoga for Men* can serve as a catalyst to accelerate and unify this trend.

By combining what I have learned about Yoga and business, I have developed a program for men that integrates the two and demystifies this ancient Eastern philosophy. As a successful entrepreneur, I have found that the concepts of Yoga and business are congruent. Both are based on an organic interpretation of the organization and the human being as changing and not static. The only certainty is change, and business organizations that understand these principles have the greatest longevity. In my volunteer work as a Yoga instructor working with cancer survivors I have noticed that there is a parallel with individuals: Longevity in humans is linked to adaptability to change.

The fear of change is our greatest obstacle because it keeps us locked into rigid patterns of behavior and prevents us from reaching our potential. We fear change because at a very subtle level all our fears are related to our mortality. But we can learn to welcome uncertainty and the unknown opportunities to pursue our creativity. Yoga is the ideal exercise to reprogram your body and mind toward flexibility and adaptability. Many of the Yogic exercises in this book have been renamed using terms from business, such as Deflating a Bloated Bureaucracy, Bending Over Backward to Serve Your Customers, Firm Footing in a Changing Marketplace, and my favorite, the headstand, which is Change from the Top Down. In addition, some positions have modifications for those with physical limitations.

In Yoga the focus of your mind is as important as the physical position. Yoga is a moving meditation, and each position reflects a state of awareness, a relationship or attitude toward the Universe. Your body is the antenna or receiving channel, and these exercises will open you to creative ideas and solutions to problems.

In order to change and have the freedom to create, businesses typically allocate a percentage of their revenue to research and development. These companies understand that to stay on the cutting edge they have to upgrade their technology. Often individuals don't afford themselves the same opportunity. We get locked into a material lifestyle where we feel a need to compete with our neighbors. This causes us to run faster and faster on the treadmill just to keep up. We do not allocate either the time or the resources for personal growth because we are spending to feed a lifestyle. Many people trade themselves for their self-image, thereby depleting their personal assets.

Our personal assets are body, mind, and spirit. The ultimate goal of Yoga is a union of the three. The meditative state of heightened awareness is the ultimate goal of these exercises. Enlightenment confers many benefits, including finding your purpose (Dharma), understanding your latent talents, experiencing synchronicity, discovering your Karma and how it can be transmuted, and understanding your place as a cocreator of the Universe.

All this talk about spirit might make you a bit uneasy. But please try to suspend your criticism and keep an open mind. Doing so is like hedging a position in the market. You are covering your downside risk. The spiritual exercises and development will at a minimum make you feel more effective in the world, and perhaps they will give you a glimpse of something far grander.

Yoga is not a religion; it is a philosophy and a science. Developed thousands of years ago, it is a systematic approach to wellness and communion with the divine. It seeks to unify and treat all paths and journeys toward enlightenment with respect and admiration. Yoga is cosmic awareness, pure consciousness, which is beyond body, mind, time, and space. It will make your life better.

Currently humankind is looking for clues to our origins in the deep regions of outer space. Science tells us that we are stardust, made of recycled elements that existed as one point of energy at the beginning of the Universe. The intelligence of the Universe flows through every cell of your body, and the answers to the mysteries can be found within.

Through the *Yoga for Men* program you can more easily achieve your potential, create unlimited wealth, and obtain self-actualization. Come join me for an inner journey to rediscover the self. I am confident that you will enjoy the trip.

Acknowledgments

I would like to offer thanks to gurus of the ages who have inspired me on my journey; they include Moses, Jesus, Lord Shiva, Rumi, the Buddha, Helen Keller, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Benjamin Franklin, Leonardo da Vinci, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Albert Einstein. I feel their support and spiritual presence.

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I give thanks to spirit for allowing me to serve.

CHAPTER

ONE

Why Yoga

Our country is currently facing yet another health care crisis. Despite the spread of managed care, medical expenses, led by drug prices, continue to surge. This rise has forced many companies to reduce or eliminate health benefits, increasing the percentage of the population that is not covered by insurance. In addition, overall satisfaction with the health care industry is declining, and a larger and larger percentage of the population is critical of managed care. The dissatisfaction has grown so great that it has ignited a movement on Capitol Hill for a patient's bill of rights.

In men's health we are also facing an emerging catastrophe. Because of an aging population and a return to unhealthy lifestyle habits, prostate cancer has emerged as a major health problem. An office of men's health needs to be established in the Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness of this deadly disease. A bill called the Men's Health Act needs to be passed and resources authorized to address these issues. In the meantime, men must take responsibility for their own health and well-being and be actively engaged in all their health care decisions. This is especially important for prostate cancer, which has been linked to lifestyle choices. Taking up Yoga and changing diet may be the most important preventive steps for avoiding this disease and improving overall health.

The pace of the world pushes us at breakneck speeds. Those in fast-track careers in corporate America are often overcome by stress. Even for those not on a fast track, juggling the responsibilities of raising kids when both parents are working can be extremely difficult. As commuting time keeps increasing, we have less and less time for ourselves.

The Effects of Stress in the United States of America

Stress is America's number-one health problem, costing the U.S. economy \$300 billion annually.

43 percent of all adults suffer health problems caused by stress.

75 to 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints or disorders.

Stress is responsible for more than half of the 550 million workdays lost to absenteeism annually.

A three-year study by a large corporation showed that more than 60 percent of employee absences were caused by psychological problems such as stress.

Workers' compensation costs for stress-related illnesses have skyrocketed and threaten to bankrupt the system. In California alone the costs from such claims now exceed \$1 billion annually. Nine out of ten job-stress lawsuits are successful, with an average payout of more than four times that of regular injury claims.

40 percent of all worker turnover is the result of job stress.

Workplace violence is rampant. Homicide is the second leading cause of fatal occupational injury and the leading cause of death for working women.

Immune disturbances from the common cold and herpes to arthritis and AIDS have been linked to stress. Recent research has confirmed the important role stress plays in causing cardiovascular disease, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, skin conditions, and neurological and emotional disorders.

The market for stress management programs, products, and services amounted to over \$10 billion in the year 2000.

~~We are constantly being bombarded with all sorts of stimuli, which require our immediate attention. The fight or flight response is often triggered, and a chemical change ensues that affects every cell in our bodies. The continuous release of the hormone adrenaline can wreak havoc on a body.~~

Men, both in the workplace and at home, are often overwhelmed, and their immune systems respond in ways that lead to lack of energy, grumpiness, increased absenteeism, chronic illness, work-related injuries, and turnover. These effects not only harm the bottom line of the company but the well-being and quality of life of the family.

Numerous studies have identified the following factors as causing the most stress in men:

1. Death of a spouse or family member
2. Divorce, separation, or marital conflicts
3. Injury or health issues for self or family member
4. Balancing work and family responsibilities
5. Workplace issues such as termination, performance reviews, etc.
6. Retirement
7. Sexual difficulties
8. Moving

The *Yoga for Men* program provides you with tools you can use daily to better cope with stressful events so that you can maintain your health and the health of your family. You will enhance your own self-understanding, thereby setting the tone for harmonious, loving relationships. And you will improve your ability to adapt to change and cope with special needs or challenges.

Yoga for Men is beneficial in the workplace as well. By relearning that authority and power are equated with productivity, integrity, and creativity, employees will feel empowered and willing to embrace the organization's goals. As a result, customer relationships will improve and the organization will prosper.

In many cases it's not individuals' lack of education or technical training that hinders the growth of a company but their approach to dealing with customers and employees. Yoga and meditation can change the way we interact with others, not only at work but also at home. All will welcome the daily benefits from these improved relationships.

Industries may come and go, as may businesses, but if we stay flexible we can re-create ourselves daily and develop the goods and services demanded by the marketplace. We need to learn not to fear change but to embrace it. By letting go of the fear we can become more effective in addressing the needs of our clients and customers and in motivating our employees to share our vision of the future. When we focus on giving, our family relationships will improve and our sex lives will be enhanced.

Yoga for Men can help transport you to a more calming and comforting reality. All you need is an open mind and the desire to make minor changes in your life. Your body is in a constant state of change. At the cellular level you are re-creating yourself every few months. Yoga can make you more flexible and adaptable to changes in your life and in the world around you.

Back in the '80s I was pursuing a fast-track career in corporate America; when I came down with an ulcer that almost put me in the hospital, I knew I had to start making some life changes. Perhaps like many of you I had always associated Yoga with left-wing refugees from the sixties. I believed it was an escape from reality. But I found that Yoga connects us to the present by quieting the mind of thoughts about the past and the future. I found it difficult at first to train my mind to stop thinking about the past and the future. In a world focused on the bottom line, we become biased toward observable, tangible action. Practicing Yoga can help you overcome the bias of your senses and social conditioning at work and at home. Men can learn to practice Yoga and meditation to improve the

quality of their lives.

~~The daily practice of Yoga can help you become more productive in your career and more peaceful in your personal life. Ultimately Yoga can help you enjoy your life fully. What form of physical exercise does all this? What physical activity can you do anywhere, any time, without any investment in equipment? It's like having your shrink, place of worship, and health club all rolled into one—the perfect combination for any man.~~

The wide range of benefits from practicing Yoga are noted in Table 1.1, which was prepared by the International Association of Yoga Therapists. For each physiological change associated with Yoga, I list corresponding psychological and biochemical changes.

TABLE 1.1 Benefits of Yoga

| Physiological Benefits | Psychological Benefits | Biochemical Effects |
|--|---|--|
| Autonomic nervous system equilibrium stabilizes, with a tendency toward parasympathetic nervous system dominance rather than the usual stress-induced sympathetic nervous system dominance | Somatic and kinesthetic awareness increase | Glucose decreases |
| Pulse rate decreases | Mood improves and subjective well-being increases | Sodium decreases |
| Respiratory rate decreases | Self-acceptance and self-actualization increase | Total cholesterol decreases |
| Blood pressure decreases (of special significance for hyporeactors) | Social adjustment increases | Triglycerides decrease |
| Galvanic skin response increases | Anxiety and depression decrease | HDL cholesterol increases |
| Alpha brain waves increase (theta, delta, and beta waves also increase during various stages of meditation) | Hostility decreases | LDL cholesterol decreases |
| EMG activity decreases | Psychomotor functions improve | VLDL cholesterol decreases |
| Cardiovascular efficiency increases | Grip strength increases | Cholinesterase increases |
| Respiratory efficiency increases (respiratory amplitude and smoothness increase, tidal volume increases, vital capacity increases, breathholding time increases) | Dexterity and fine motor skills improve | Catecholamine decrease |
| Gastrointestinal function normalizes | Eye-hand coordination improves | ATPase increases |
| Endocrine function normalizes | Choice reaction time improves | Hematocrit increases |
| Excretory functions improve | Steadiness improves | Hemoglobin increases |
| Musculoskeletal flexibility and joint range of motion increase | Depth perception improves | Lymphocyte count increases |
| Posture improves | Balance improves | Total white blood-cell count decreases |
| Strength and resiliency increase | Integrated functioning of body parts improves | Thyroxine increases |
| Endurance increases | Cognitive function | Vitamin C |

improves

increases

Energy level increases

Attention improves

Total serum
protein
increases

Weight normalizes

Concentration improves

Sleep improves

Memory improves

Immunity increases

Learning efficiency
improves

Pain decreases

Symbol coding improves,
depth perception
improves, flicker fusion
frequency improves

My first Yoga class was an accident. A friend invited me to her exercise class. When I arrived, I realized it was Yoga, and I was the only male. It had already started when we got there, so it was too late for me to leave. I figured I would just go along with it, and go to the gym for a real man's workout later that afternoon. But in five minutes I was sweating and panting on the floor, while the others in the class glided gracefully from one pose to another. How could this be? I realized that Yoga wasn't just for sissies.

I had tried many other forms of exercise, but I never achieved my fitness goals because I wasn't breathing correctly. Yoga taught me how to breathe, and then I was able to achieve my physical potential. I may not be Arnold Schwarzenegger, but I have a better body now than when I was sixteen.

Table 1.2, also prepared by the International Association of Yoga Therapists, compares the benefits of Yoga and traditional exercise.

TABLE 1.2 The Advantages of Yoga Compared to Traditional Exercise

| Yoga | Traditional Exercise |
|---|--|
| Parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation response) dominates | Sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight response) dominates |
| Subcortical regions of the brain are used (associated with well-being); Yoga can help reverse or eliminate addictive behavior | Cortical regions of the brain are used (associated with primary functions) |
| Slow, dynamic movements | Rapid, forceful movements |
| Normalization of muscle tone | Increased muscle tension |
| Low risk of injuring muscles and ligaments | Higher risk of injuring muscles and ligaments |
| Low caloric consumption | Moderate to high caloric consumption |
| Effort minimized | Effort maximized |
| Energizing (breathing is kept natural or controlled) | Fatiguing (breathing is taxed) |
| Balanced activity of opposing muscle groups | Imbalanced activity of opposing muscle groups |
| Noncompetitive, process-oriented | Competitive, goal-oriented |
| Internal awareness | External awareness |
| Limitless possibilities for growth in self-awareness | Boredom factor |

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Some people have the mistaken notions that Yoga is painful and that Yogis are just masochists in turbans. I too had these preconceptions, but I soon realized that pain was a judgment I was placing on a feeling I was unaccustomed to. When I stopped judging that feeling as painful I began to excel. Now I think of it as surrender. When you reach advanced levels of Yoga you can stretch yourself into positions where you can finally surrender to something greater than yourself, and it feels great. In many ways it's similar to orgasm. Do you consider the tension that precedes an orgasm painful? If you succumb to the feeling you judge as painful, you will never experience the bliss of inner peace that Yoga can provide.

This book offers an introduction to various Yogic exercises, which you can use as the basis for your daily Yoga practice. It will take you through each pose and give you specific instructions on positioning your body and focusing your mind. You should find using this book enjoyable and humorous. Various positions have been renamed and customs modified so you can enjoy the learning process. Chapter 7 offers a meditation I developed to help you incorporate positive changes into your life.

The photographs show an advanced practitioner to give you an appreciation of your potential. In addition there are instructions for Yoga positions that can be performed in the workplace and modified positions for beginners and those with physical limitations. The Yoga practices in this book are somewhat eclectic and draw upon the ancient traditions of Hatha, including Ananda, Sivananda, and Tantra, of which Kundalini is a part.

I invite you to join me on this journey of self-discovery and personal improvement. With persistence and hard work you can achieve your peak physical condition, improve your performance on the job, and possibly better understand the purpose of your life. Is our souls' journey merely to accumulate material possessions, or is there a deeper meaning? Ultimately the goal of Yoga is to integrate your practice into daily living so that each step you make, each breath you take is done with mindfulness. In this way your life becomes a meditation in action and fundamental enlightenment is possible.

I hope to inspire you with my words and encourage you to proceed.

As you begin this journey I offer you this Hebrew blessing: "May you walk with the spirit, the light of the divine, for all of the days of your life."

Love

—

Peace

—

Namaste

(The spirit in me honors the spirit in you.)

CHAPTER

TWO

*Tips for
Beginning
Yoga Practice*

Before beginning your Yoga practice, you'll need to consider some practical details.

When to Practice

It is helpful to practice once a day. Practicing first thing in the morning is best because it helps prepare you for the day. Also, if you put your practice off until later in the day, you may never get to it. And it is best to practice on an empty stomach. Before dinner is also a good time as long as you don't get distracted.

Where to Practice

You should practice in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. If you attend a Yoga class, remember that Yoga is about going within and not about competition. Be forgiving of the condition of your body and take pride in your gradual accomplishments.

How Long to Practice

The Yoga program in this book should take about an hour for the exercises and fifteen minutes for the meditation. You can extend or condense the time depending on how long you hold your positions. Beginners may want to start out with 15-second intervals on and off. I have built up to about 60 seconds in each pose. Remember that you should always continue breathing in each position.

What to Wear

Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing is a must. A few blankets are also helpful because as you go into deep states of meditation your body temperature will lower as a result of your metabolic processes slowing down. In addition, I recommend a thick rubber mat, which can be purchased at a sporting goods store. Your Yoga instructor may have extension straps to help you reach certain positions; you can purchase these as well. Practice Yoga in your stocking feet or bare feet.

What to Look At

In general, try to keep your eyes shut except when in standing or balancing positions. Imagine an Olympic high diver before he jumps: His eyes are open, but he is not focused on anything particular. He has gone within.

What to Focus Your Mind On

When you start your Yoga practice you will be primarily focused on what to do with your body. As your practice develops the positions will feel more natural and you will begin to gain control over your awareness. *Yoga for Men* includes a series of positive affirmations, which can be your focus as you hold your positions. Eventually you may let go of these as well and just focus on the breathing or a mantra. A mantra is a repeated phrase that, like a boat, guides you past your thoughts into the meditative state. Mantras will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

What to Eat

FOOD

There is an inherent intelligence in food. In our attempt to improve efficiency in food production v

have sacrificed quality for quantity. The law of cause and effect is clearly demonstrated by our food industry. ~~Perhaps it is not just red wine that gives Europeans better health but their lifestyle and relationship to food.~~ The fast-food mentality is harmful to our collective health. If we look to the animal kingdom for guidance, we notice that there is no incidence of osteoporosis because animals follow their natural instincts. If we can get in touch with our natural instincts, then many diseases which are really the results of lifestyle choices, can be avoided.

The wisdom of our physiology has provided us with six tastes:

Sweet: Pasta, bread, wheat, grains, meat, fish, seafood, fruits

Sour: Milk, yogurt, lemon, vinegar, and all salad dressings

Salt: Self-explanatory

Bitter: Green leafy vegetables, such as spinach

Astringent: Beans, lentils, tofu

Pungent: Spices, mustard

Ayurveda, the science of life, developed in conjunction with Yoga, the science of union with the divine. Ayurvedic nutrition recommends that we have at least one meal a day that includes all six tastes. The reason we have so many problems with obesity and health is that the typical American diet is out of balance. It is primarily sweet, sour, and salt: French fries and ketchup. When we utilize all the tastes that nature has provided us, we can come back into balance. In addition to more fruit and vegetables we need to add new food groups, like soy and legumes, to our diets.

Reducing consumption of meat will lower testosterone levels, aiding in the fight against prostate cancer. In addition, studies have shown that meat consumption increases aggressiveness. For maximum benefits to your Yoga practice and meditation I recommend reducing meat consumption and substituting fish, especially fatty fish such as salmon, and soy products.

For those with prostate cancer the following foods and or nutrients may be helpful:

Tomatoes

Zinc and vitamin B6

Saw palmetto (160 to 320 milligrams per day)

Amino acids: glycine, alanine, and glutamic acid

Bee pollen

Pax ginseng

PC-SPEs (herbal mixture of baikal, skullcap, rhabdosia, mum, dyer's woad, Chinese licorice, reishi and saw palmetto)

Please consult with your physician before starting to take supplements.

FASTING

Fasting may also be useful in helping you to change your eating habits permanently and for cleansing toxicity built up over a lifetime. I recommend fasting only if you have the guidance of a teacher and you coordinate your fasting with your doctor. A fast may enhance your appreciation of eating and all the wonderful natural foods that are available to you.

It is most important to eat as slowly as possible and to be present in the moment when you are

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