

## What Is Yoga And What Are Its Origins?

Yoga is often recognized as a form of exercise that stretches and strengthens the body using different poses known as ASANAS. For some people, it represents a realization of inner self satisfaction, while others see it as a religion that they believe and feel they must follow. When you think about it, all of these statements make it hard to understand to fully define yoga.

Yoga actually goes far beyond just mere exercises full of awkward routines. It is the union of mind, spirit and body. It is derived primarily from the Hindu philosophy used to attain spiritual insight and harmony and generally refers to the common use of a system of exercises that is practiced as part of this discipline.

The word is derived from the Sanskrit yeung, which means to join. A yoke as used on oxen is closely related, but also the same root gives us join, junction, junta, adjust, joust, and juxtapose to name a few.

There are many institutions of yoga that have their own unique practices and beliefs. But in this article we have boiled it down to the five most common yoga practices. However, bear in mind that there are many schools and paths that are not listed here.

**HATHA:** probably the most popular variety of yoga and one that has been commonly taught for years. For them yoga is perfecting the mind by way of perfecting the body. With this technique many asanas or postures, breathing techniques and meditations are used.

**ASHTANGA:** another popular style that is much faster than the other schools. For them yoga can be considered as a type of aerobic activity where they instill quick and smooth transitions between poses.

**KUNDALINI:** This school is focused on awakening and focusing on what is known as kundalini energy. Kundalini energy is most easily compared to life energy that lies dormant in our bodies. It is commonly represented by a coiled snake.

**MANTRA:** focused on calming the mind and body through the use of words and sounds. The well known om chant is commonly heard in this school.

**TANTRA:** well known by way of its focus on sexual spirituality. They also focus on kundalini energy, although their intent for awakening it is much different from the Kundalini practice.

Yoga is a very diverse practice, regardless of which school you choose. People young and old can gain many benefits from regular practices, and asanas can be adjusted to fit physical limitations and other complications.

If you want a break from treadmills, weight rooms, or the pool, why not consider yoga?

Not only are you striving towards physical well being, you are also striving towards spiritual well being.

Traditionally, there are eight fundamental paths: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Purna Yoga, Tantra Yoga, Maha Yoga and Ashtanga or Raja Yoga. In the western world, the term yoga often refers to Hatha yoga and its postures, movements, and breathing techniques.

The ultimate goal of yoga is the attainment of liberation from worldly suffering and the cycle of birth and death. It demands mastery over the body, mind, and emotional self, and transcendence of desire. It is said to lead gradually to knowledge of the true nature of reality.

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### About the Author

C.S.Cox has published many ebooks including the new "Yoga Training Guide" designed for those desiring to learn about this exciting ancient art. Find out more at <http://www.powerbodyyoga.com>