

Yoga To Maintain Your Quality Of Life

During this time of reduced activity, three physical attributes begin a slow but preventable decline: muscle strength, flexibility, and balance. With the loss of muscle strength and flexibility, we become more prone to injury or tearing a muscle. Hamstring tears, calf muscle tears, or even a torn Achilles become common "older athlete" injuries. Your mind remembers how to compete. It's just that your body can't keep up. With loss of flexibility, it also becomes harder to balance. So, instead of skipping down the stairs, you become more cautious, hanging onto the handrail to be safe. Walking across rocks on a hike or balancing for fun on some washed up logs at the beach, you become tentative. If this sounds familiar, consider yoga.

Today, there are dozens of styles of yoga. The vinyasa-style yoga will improve muscle strength, flexibility and balance. Each instructor has a slightly different approach. Some emphasize breath control, some are more meditative, while others offer power vinyasa. Interestingly, I haven't had the same routine repeated twice, even though I might have had the same instructor for 10 classes in a row. What you will receive is a logical progression of standing, seated, balance and supine poses. Your muscles, tendons and connective tissues will be blissfully stretched. You'll learn how to expand and control your breath, and improve your focus, quieting the mind and reducing stress. You don't have to be a "Gumby" to do yoga. In every position there are options, ranging from beginner to advanced. Everyone practices at their own level, based on their limits, and improving with practice. No matter how advanced you become, one still "practices" yoga. There's always something new to learn - both in your body and in your mind.

What can you expect by attending yoga classes regularly? Besides improved flexibility, balance, and core muscle strength, you'll also reduce mental stress, improve muscle relaxation, and foster a greater sense of well-being. Cardiopulmonary fitness will improve. Sleep will be easier and deeper. Posture will improve. If you face low back pain or blood pressure issues, yoga can help. The benefits yoga provides for these conditions has been scientifically established by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Whether you attend class five times a week or just once a week, come and experience the benefits of yoga for yourself. Consistency is the key. The strength, flexibility, balance, and focus that you'll develop will serve you well, no matter what other activity you may do. Just ask the Seattle Seahawks, LeBron James, or Tao Parchon-Lynch, a 96-year-old who was named the world's oldest yoga teacher by the Guinness World Records. As Parchon-Lynch says, "I believe that we can always reach just a little bit further."

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