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Getting Started in Yoga

by Anita Goa, RSC/NY Group Exercise Instructor

I hear it all the time: "I like yoga, but I'm not flexible, so I can't do it!" Most people think they have to be flexible to practice yoga, but this is not the case. Yoga is for everybody!

There are many different styles of yoga and no rules that pre-determine what style a beginner should learn. The following 8 suggestions will help you get started and motivated:

- 1 First and foremost check out our Group Exercise Schedule to find a Beginner Yoga class.
- 2 Find a teacher with whom you feel comfortable. The style of yoga is secondary. If you don't feel comfortable with the teacher, try another class. Don't give up. Shop around until you find the perfect match that works for you.
- 3 Everybody has their own opinion about a certain yoga technique or a certain yoga teacher. That doesn't mean their experience(s) will work for you. Find out for yourself and make up your own mind.
- 4 Yoga is not a competition. When you are in class, try not to compare yourself to others. Instead of judging yourself on your level, be yourself, and use the more experienced practitioners as inspiration to get to class on a regular basis.
- 5 It takes time to develop a yoga practice. You can get injured in a yoga class if you let the ego take over and work beyond your limit.
- 6 If you have an injury or a posture doesn't feel right, be sure to tell the instructor. You will then be shown a modification or a substitute posture. It is better to err on the side of caution.
- 7 Remember cause and effect. Yoga is like any other form of activity. You can only improve through practice. Knowledge is power, but as the Hatha Yoga Pradipika says: "The fruits of yoga are not obtained by reading textbooks, wearing yoga garments or by having conversations about it, but only through tireless practice." With this in mind I would like to recommend *The Heart of Yoga* by T.K.V. Desikachar. It is easy to read and covers many aspects of yoga and how to incorporate it into one's daily life.
- 8 Everybody is a beginner. Having practiced yoga for 3 years, I still feel like a beginner. If we have a beginner's attitude, we are more open to learning new things.

Six and a half years ago I moved to NYC from Norway. I had to learn a new language, learn east from west, avenues from streets, uptown from downtown, how to take the subway, find the right job and much more. I got advice along the way, but ultimately I had to figure out a lot for myself and find my own way. Yoga is similar in many ways. Only you can determine what feels good to your body and mind. I can guarantee results if you practice yoga consistently and conscientiously. Good luck and come practice with me in class. Namaste!

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The class is taught on Mondays from 11 am – 12 pm with Group Exercise Instructor, Frederick Schjang.



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