



## *Introduction*

**WE** are a society of extremely busy people.

The ability to multi-task is considered the sign of an important and productive individual, so we try to juggle as many projects as we possibly can. We've grown accustomed to operating in high gear, with minimal down time. Unfortunately, the quick and snappy pace of modern day society does not coincide with a human being's natural rhythm. If we could learn to not be distracted or irritated by the steady bombardment and demands of external influences, our lives would be easier and less stressful. The truth is that we actually function better and accomplish more if we are not trying to attend to too many things at once. But the distractions aren't going to go away. So we must learn how to deal with them.

We must create our own inner sense of tranquility. We must establish a pace for ourselves that is comfortable and manageable. We accomplish these goals by choosing which stimuli to attend to and which stimuli to ignore. This type of consciously induced acclimatization is not an easy endeavor, for our lifestyle demands that we operate in spite of and in response to over-stimulation in the form of sensory overload and task overload. Our cognition itself has habituated to living in a chronic state of stress, such that we are always vigilant and somewhat anxious. It's like we are running a race every day. Some of us are trying to get ahead, some of us are trying to keep up, and some of us are hoping that we will not be stepped on or left behind. Many people have forgotten how to slow down, relax, and let go of the need to be in control, the need to be perpetually busy, and the need to be in motion. They don't realize that the psychological and physical impact of living in a state of chronic stress is fatiguing and extremely harmful. They don't realize that the hectic pace and competitive nature of today's lifestyle makes a profound contribution to whatever it is that ails us.

Yoga offers a way out of the rat race, or at least a positive way to deal with it. When sensory stimuli are reduced, subtle somatic indicators are no longer overshadowed by mental chatter, physical discomfort, and external demands. The soft voice of the soma (soma = the Self experienced as a body) comes into consciousness and makes itself heard. A tranquil internal environment is a necessary pre-requisite for the creation of the Observer-consciousness. The Observer-consciousness, or the Witness-consciousness, is the part of the self that can accurately assess the details of our own internal environment – the movements and fluctuations in the body, the breath, and the mind. From the perspective of the Observer, we learn to relinquish our subjective and judgmental nature. We learn to relinquish the desire for retribution. We learn to see ourselves as we really are – not as we want to be, or as we think we should be. Underneath the veneer of our superficial smiles and stylish shoes, subconsciously we are expecting and bracing for an imminent emergency, confrontation, or reprimand. Meanwhile we pursue happiness in our usual random style, oblivious to the real reasons why contentment continues to slip through our fingers. What we don't know is that the seemingly elusive state of contentment must be consciously and continually cultivated.

The process of yoga asana begins with the intent to filter out superfluous stimuli that is nothing more than an unnecessary distraction. When practicing yoga asana, the stillness of the body and the silence of the mind lay the groundwork for the experience of a tranquil inner environment. This marks the beginning of an honest relationship between our bodies and our Selves, and initiates the process of healing. If we are truly seeking some sort of transformation through yoga, it is essential that we develop the ability to detach and observe ourselves and others with objectivity. This is how we gradually learn to shed our guarded nature, our artificial affectations, and other negative or destructive tendencies. This is how we cultivate the courage and faith to let our authentic selves be revealed - to ourselves and to the world around us.

At the beginning of every yoga class, we perform a simple ritual. In a seated or standing position, we close our eyes and bring our attention to the breath. This small and seemingly insignificant activity is actually a wonderful way of clarifying our purpose and establishing our intent for the class session. It shifts our awareness toward the internal environment of the soma. It prepares the body and mind to receive intuitive inspiration and guidance. Whether seated or standing, this is an easy exercise that anyone can do. Try it right now. Bring your hands to prayer gesture (Anjali hasta) in front of the heart. Close your eyes. Focus on what you are feeling in your body. Notice the internal rhythm, the steady sound, and the bodily sensations associated with your breathing. Every time you exhale, let your body *relax a little more*. This process of conscious relaxation is based on somatic awareness. As the mind slowly scans the entire body, the breath is allowed and encouraged to flow freely, supplying the body with energy, harmony, and unity. The process is best accomplished if you do not intellectualize or overanalyze the procedure or the results. Let the experience be as simple and straightforward as the instructions.

“Focus on what you are feeling in your body.”

“Every time you exhale, relax a little more.”

Every now and then a rare individual is able to successfully survive the molting process of maturation and arrive at adulthood unbroken or minimally wounded, as his or her original authentic Self. This individual is unique because he or she is able to function in a state of honesty and equanimity, content and responsible, without any need for disguise or dysfunction. Rare is the enlightened individual who has nothing to prove and nothing to defend.





# 1

## Chapter One

# *Theory and Tradition*

A common Yoga adage states that "how you approach asana (postures) is how you live your life." At first, most yoga practitioners question the validity of this statement. Their initial response may be something like "that's very interesting in a *metaphysical* way, but it doesn't really apply to me." In effect, what they are saying is, "I see no connection." Only after much introspection prompted by the experiential Yoga practice itself does the connection begin to make sense. When you are finally able to step outside of the self-dramas, self-absorption, and pre-occupation with your own life, you start to see the truth inherent in the statement. Now you have learned to function simultaneously as both observer and participant, and to do so in a truly objective manner. Now you see how your attitude affects your life experience. You understand that you create your own version of reality.

### *Contemporary Yoga vs. Traditional Yoga*

Today's fitness-oriented yoga classes are quite different from the way yoga used to be taught. Originally, a yoga student was a full time spiritual aspirant. He received initiation by a guru or teacher into a particular yoga lineage, and was taught on a one-to-one basis. Most of the instruction was oral, and much memorization was required. The student was trained in all aspects of yoga. He studied a comprehensive program that included philosophy, history, morality, yoga postures, and breathing techniques. All of these topics served as a foundation for the advanced practices of meditation and other esoteric techniques. Experiential understanding was essential, and the student was expected to dedicate long hours of daily practice for many years if he wanted to attain a degree of mastery in yoga. The traditional yoga student considered his yoga sadhana (practice) to be a way of life. Every aspect of the student's daily life was built around, influenced by, or dedicated to his yoga practice. This is quite different from the view taken by today's yoga students. Nowadays, yoga is treated as more of a hobby or form of exercise. Most students consider yoga to be one aspect of their lives. It is atypical, but not altogether unheard of, for a contemporary yoga student to say that yoga "is" his life.

Today most yoga instruction occurs in a group setting, and the foundation of the practice is based on attaining physical strength and flexibility. Students tend to think of yoga exclusively as a fitness class, and often they take a yoga class simply to do some good stretching that will complement their aerobic workouts. The majority of yoga classes taught in fitness facilities focus on Hatha yoga, which includes the physical practices of postures (Asana) and breathing exercises (Pranayama). Unlike the traditional yoga program, meditation is usually absent from today's classes. Likewise, the philosophy, history, and

psychology of yoga are hardly ever mentioned. Contemporary yoga students are free to pick and choose which class, which teacher, what kind of program they want to study, and how often they want to attend. Students might choose a class based on how well they like the teacher, the teacher's reputation, the convenience of the location where the class is held, the convenience of the scheduled class time, the cost of the class, and the specific style of yoga being taught (emphasis on fitness, strength training, relaxation, seniors, back care, etc). Some students will study yoga for a few months or even for a few years, and assume that they have mastered the practice because they know how to perform the poses. Thinking that they have "been there and done that," they move on to the newest fitness trend. Unfortunately, many of today's yoga students, even those that have attended yoga classes for a long period of time, have only experienced the most superficial aspect of what yoga is all about. This is primarily due to the fact that a superficial or purely physical understanding of yoga is the extent of many yoga teachers' knowledge. A yoga teacher can only teach what she knows, and she only knows what she herself has learned, experienced, and understood.

The intent of this text is to provide you with basic knowledge regarding the comprehensive yoga experience. You will be introduced to the classic yoga texts and some of the revered gurus and yoga teachers of the past and present. You will study a brief history of yoga, and learn about the philosophy, psychology, and lifestyle associated with the yoga tradition. You will also receive an in-depth analysis of 50+ commonly taught yoga poses and instruction in a few basic techniques of Pranayama (breathing techniques). You can accept and use any information that registers with you. You can also leave alone or ignore any information that does not fit with your current teaching philosophy or level of understanding. But if you are going to call yourself a yoga teacher, you should at least have a rudimentary knowledge of the yoga tradition – whether you ever mention it in your classes at all.

Most students are very interested in the small tidbits of informative discourse that a teacher offers during class. For example, you might remind students that the final relaxation is not just about relaxing your body, but it is also about relaxing the mind. This would be a good time to mention the classic definition of yoga – "yoga is the process of stilling the movements of the mind." Or perhaps a student seems anxious and fidgety when trying to hold still in a pose, and you would like to help alleviate his frustration. You will probably induce a bout of laughter (and relief) with a comment like this: "In traditional yoga, they say that you have mastered a pose when you can hold it for three and a half hours!" Students are really bright. For the most part, they will understand and appreciate your attempts to inject these gems that speak of the yoga tradition and aid their ability to understand.

Our mission is to provide a safe and supportive environment in which students and clients can participate in mind-body fitness experiences. Our intent is to offer a fun, friendly, and informative fitness-based session that is challenging, inspirational, and fulfilling. We will practice yoga postures, basic breathing, and techniques for better relaxation and stress reduction. We will learn to cultivate inner peace through awareness and self-discovery.

## 1.1 What is Yoga?

The Sanskrit word 'yoga' means to yoke, to join, or to unite. When we practice yoga, we are learning or relearning the state of unity, harmony, and bliss in the body, mind, and spirit. Over thousands of years, the science of yoga has proven itself an effective way to cultivate physical health, develop concentration, experience peace of mind, and realize our oneness in Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

- *Yoga is the science of personal development.* It is a method of learning that aims to attain unity of mind, body, and spirit through techniques involving exercise, breathing, and meditation.
- *Yoga is a way to attain a healthy body and mind.* A balanced, comprehensive yoga practice includes the following five principles that lead us toward good health:<sup>2</sup>
  - 1) Proper relaxation
  - 2) Proper exercise
  - 3) Proper breathing
  - 4) Proper diet
  - 5) Positive thinking and meditation
- *Yoga is a discipline.* Whatever type of yoga you choose to practice, be assured that you will not learn it overnight. Yoga is a skilled activity, and it takes time to attain competence in any skilled activity. It takes practice, repetition, commitment, and dedication to progress toward mastery of yoga.
- *Yoga leads us toward integration.* Whether the yogic techniques you practice are physical, mental, or behavioral, they will gradually bring about a fruitful integration of the body, the mind, and the spirit. When we practice yoga, we learn through firsthand experience that these three elements are inseparable, and that each has a direct effect on the others.
- *"Yoga is the stilling of the movements of the subconscious mind."* This is the classic definition of yoga. If you are a yoga teacher, or if you want to become a yoga teacher, you need to memorize this statement. Even if you are unclear about the exact meaning, memorize it and repeat it over and over. Have faith that insight will come.
- *Yoga is about consciously living life to the best of one's ability.* Ultimately, yoga is about learning to access, modify, and direct our physical and mental faculties. Yoga is about taking control of our lives and accepting responsibility for our behaviors, actions, and reactions.

## 1.2 Types of Yoga

If you tell someone that you are taking or teaching a yoga class, they assume that you are referring to some sort of flexibility training or perhaps a class designed for relaxation and stress reduction. But the stereotypical image of someone sitting in the lotus position with his arms and legs tangled up like a pretzel is not an altogether accurate or complete assessment of the yogic techniques. Actually, there are many different types of yoga which are collectively referred to as the ‘wheel of yoga.’ This circular image is symbolic of the fact that yoga offers various approaches to self discovery, personal transformation, and enlightenment. The spokes of the wheel include Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Mantra Yoga, and Raja Yoga. Some interpretations of the wheel concept include additional types of Yoga such as Kriya Yoga, Tantra Yoga or Laya Yoga, while other interpretations exclude some of the types presented in this model. The key idea is that all of the spokes intersect at the hub, which is the central portion of the wheel. Raja Yoga is placed within the hub, for it encompasses the common direction, common goal, and somewhat similar techniques that are shared by all types of Yoga. Philosophically speaking, we could say that all types of yoga are seeking the same outcome, but they rely on different methods or different processes to attain it. Let’s examine each type of yoga in more detail:

### Hatha Yoga

Hatha Yoga is the physical path. This is the type of yoga that is typically taught in most fitness facilities. A simplified explanation of Hatha Yoga suggests that this type of yoga is basically a physical fitness program that uses poses or static positions for the purpose of strength training, flexibility training, postural training, and to develop mind-body awareness. However, these are just the superficial reasons for practicing Hatha Yoga. Over time, the dedicated yoga student will discover that Hatha Yoga is much more than a physical program. He will realize that it is a mental practice, an introspective practice, maybe even a spiritual practice, and that it is somehow changing him for the better. In Hatha Yoga, we experience self-discovery through discipline and exploration into the capabilities of our own bodies. Asana (yoga postures) and Pranayama (breathing exercises) are the essential practices of Hatha Yoga. Hatha yoga teaches us

- to relax and release *physical* limitations, rigidities and blockages – which automatically helps to relax and release the associated *mental* limitations, rigidities and blockages
- to develop the abilities of strength, flexibility, courage and perseverance
- to cultivate inner somatic (mind-body) awareness through the practice of stillness and silence
- to understand and appreciate the importance of the breath as a mind-body technique for health and fitness

Originally, Hatha Yoga was a series of introductory techniques that served as a preparation for the more esoteric yogic practices. Other types of yoga that focus on mental training were considered more advanced than the physically-oriented practices. Theoretically (and probably realistically), it is easier to learn to control the body than it is to control the mind. But thanks to B.K.S. Iyengar’s comprehensive and insightful analysis of yoga Asana, Hatha Yoga it is now recognized as a valid path in its own right. Asana and Pranayama provide a practical and tangible approach to personal transformation, for the practitioner learns firsthand by experiencing his own body as a vehicle for self improvement.

### *Karma Yoga*

Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action. It is also referred to as the path of service. In Karma Yoga, we learn to perform duties and services to the best of our abilities and without expectation of a reward. The goal of the Karma yogi is to cheerfully and willingly accept and fulfill the responsibilities of his work, whether it is an important professional project or a mundane household chore. The Karma yogi is not motivated by desire, aggression, competition, or other egotistical reasons. The essential practices of this type of yoga include any and all duties and actions that a person performs, as long as these duties and actions are approached with a pure heart and a positive attitude.

### *Bhakti Yoga*

Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion. In Bhakti Yoga, we practice devotion and adoration to the Divine (supreme being), living spirit or life force) that resides within everyone and everything we encounter. For the Bhakti yogi, devotion should be balanced with reason, and love should be balanced with understanding.<sup>3</sup> Bhakti Yoga is not affiliated with a specific religious organization. Prayer, chanting, and singing are the essential practices of Bhakti Yoga.

### *Jnana Yoga*

Jnana Yoga is the path of knowledge and wisdom attained through intelligence. Through intense study of God, the Jnana yogi learns to differentiate between illusion and reality. The essential practices of this type of yoga involve reading, examining, and analyzing scriptures to attain conclusions. Ultimately, the Jnana yogi will achieve profound realizations through a combination of intelligence, perseverance, curiosity, comprehension, discernment, and an increasing depth of understanding.

### *Kundalini Yoga*

Kundalini Yoga is the path of energy. The essential practices of Kundalini Yoga involve breathing and movement techniques to activate the chakras, the seven subtle energy centers in the body. The main goal of Kundalini Yoga is to awaken and raise the latent Kundalini energy that (supposedly) resides at the base of the spine. The esoteric yogic beliefs of Kundalini Yoga are not readily accepted or ratified by the scientific or medical communities.

### *Mantra Yoga*

Mantra Yoga is the path of voice or sound. The essential practices of Mantra Yoga include the rhythmic oral (or mental) repetitions of certain sounds, chants, or mantras which may be in the form of a syllable, a word, or a phrase. It is the belief of Mantra Yoga that certain syllables and words, when repeated for days, months, or years, are said to possess healing potential.

### *Raja Yoga*

Raja Yoga is the path of meditation and inquiry into one's own mind. Raja means royal, and this type of yoga is referred to as the 'royal road.' In Raja Yoga we learn deep self respect through self mastery. The Raja yogi believes that the universe exists for the self, giving the self an illusion of centrality which results in respect for all creatures.<sup>4</sup> Through the essential practices of concentration, contemplation, and meditation, he seeks to comprehend the nature of existence. Many consider Raja Yoga (also called



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## PART ONE

# *Somatic Education*

## *1.1 Mind-Body Methods for Health and Fitness*

There is a powerful movement toward Mind-Body awareness in the field of health and fitness. It is no longer enough to experience movement or exercises randomly or mindlessly. The instructional emphasis is shifting away from activities performed unconsciously, in favor of direct experience of one's inner awareness, of being able to perceive and consciously direct the "use" of the body. Through Mind-Body techniques, we awaken our somatic (the conscious experience of the self as a body) awareness. We recognize the Self as an embodied Mind that interacts with both an internal and external environment. Conscious awareness of our somatic processes allows us to improve our abilities to sense, perceive, choose, and respond. Such conscious utilization of the Mind-Body connection is beneficial when learning a skilled activity, as a means to restore functional capacity, or to facilitate stress reduction. Mind-Body (holistic) techniques turn the light on our inner awareness. They help us reconnect with our internal locus of control and challenge us to accept personal responsibility for the situations and relationships in our lives. These techniques teach us to recognize how the external environment affects our internal awareness, and vice versa. They teach us how to consciously restore homeostasis to the body and return serenity to the self. In Mind-Body methods, there is no right or wrong. We seek no particular end goal. We simply stay present for the exploratory process itself, and in those moments of stillness, silence, and objective self-observance, the answers come to us, free and flowing.

### *Basic Concepts of Mind-Body Methods featuring Somatic Education*

- ☺ SOMATICS 101: Be still, Be quiet, Be present (mindfulness)
- ☺ RELAXATION: Anything you do can be done better if you are relaxed.
- ☺ EFFORTLESS EFFORT: Try to do your best, but avoid trying too hard.
- ☺ SENSORY AWARENESS is the key to all Mind-Body Methods.
- ☺ RESPONSIBILITY: What you make of your life is up to You.

## *Soma*

the individual Self, expressed as a mind and a body, as it experiences relationship with others and as it interacts with the world as we know it via sensory perception.

## *Mind-Body techniques can potentially address the following features of a person's life*

### Physical fitness with an emphasis on mindfulness

- Concept: Looking good
- Needs: Physiological and safety
- Satisfaction: found in physical appearance and abilities
- Techniques: Focus on posture, flexibility, strength, and skills

### Stress reduction

- Concept: Feeling good
- Needs: Belongingness, love, and esteem
- Satisfaction: found in mental attitude and equanimity
- Techniques: Focus on breathing and relaxation

### Personal empowerment

- Concept: Moving up
- Needs: To know, to understand, and aesthetics
- Satisfaction: found through (1) deeper understandings, (2) cultivating loving relationships and meaningful work, and (3) identifying and acting on priorities
- Techniques: Focus on body awareness and self-discovery

### Transcendence

- Concept: Moving on
- Needs: Self-actualization and authenticity
- Satisfaction: found through (1) deeper connections with the self and the universal spirit, and through (2) compassion in action – offering service to others
- Techniques: Focus on self-initiated work that involves helping and giving back.

## *A Unique Type of Fitness Experience*

The future of fitness lies in practical training techniques that address the health and healing potential. These techniques represent a specialized type of training which explores the undeniable connection that exists between the Body, Mind, and Breath. Known as 'Mind-Body methods' or 'Mind-Body techniques,' this integrative, disciplined style of training can be defined as any technique, method, or modality that helps to educate individuals through physical and/or psychological experiential inquiries that are designed to reveal ways in which we can improve ourselves by making better (wiser) choices that favor psychosomatic health and vitality. There are three primary components or "pathways" that make up Mind-Body Methods. These components are the Mind, the Body, and the Breath. Techniques based on these three components can effectively promote better health and fitness by helping individuals to release tension, to reduce stress, to promote better breathing, to monitor and recognize somatic information, and to be able to consciously establish a general state of well-being whenever the need arises.

Visualize the three components, Mind, Body, Breath, as the three points of an equilateral triangle. All three of the components are connected, interrelated, and interdependent, with none having greater importance than any of the others. Thus you can enter into the Mind-Body mechanism via any one of the three pathways, for a change in one has an immediate and direct effect on the others. For example, when we practice Hatha Yoga's static stretches, we unexpectedly discover that we are also transforming the mental state via the physical pathway, though the immediate and superficial goal may be simply good posture or improved appearance. When we practice mental-repetition of a term or phrase such as "Let go", the release of physical tension is an unforeseen byproduct of concentrated mental focus. And when we bring our attention to experiencing and regulating the state of the breath, we come to acknowledge the breath as the ultimate barometer of our immediate state of being. We realize that through the respiratory process we have found a quick, easy, and efficient way to diminish both physical tension and mental stress, with the tremendously satisfying effect being an undeniable sense of general well-being. Mind-Body techniques will not only make you **feel** better, but they will make you **feel better about yourself**.

All Mind-Body techniques are grounded in somatic awareness - which is the ability to access, identify, and acknowledge what we are feeling within our own bodies. Somatic awareness is a psychologically-oriented concept based on subjective somatic data. The ability to observe somatic (bodily) sensations such as tension, relaxation, pain, and comfort provide insight into one's immediate state of being – whether it is satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or somewhere in between. The focus on somatic education is what makes the program valuable. Somatic-based education teaches the student how to self-sense, self-correct, and self-generate. Students will learn to effectively manage all aspects of their lives via resourcefulness and integrity. We could even suggest that they are learning the art of self-healing. Depending on the goal, emphasis, style, and mode of presentation, Mind-Body methods can be designated as either Fitness programs or Wellness programs, and the majority of them are a combination of both.

#### Fitness Programs

- ✓ Somatically-based techniques that include a psychological component
- ✓ Emphasize posture, balance, strength, flexibility, and physical fitness

#### Wellness Programs

- ✓ Psychologically-based techniques that include a somatic component
- ✓ Emphasize lifestyle choices and self-awareness

Though the terms fitness and wellness are often used interchangeably, the two words actually carry slightly different connotations. If someone is said to be fit, we assume that his overall appearance will be physically sound and that his body proportions will be of a proper, or at least reasonable, size and shape. We associate the terms fit or fitness with a well-toned, healthy body that is attractive to behold. On the other hand, if someone is said to be well, we assume that he is in good health and free from disease or ailments. We associate the terms well or wellness with being cured or healed, which implies a generally healthy state of being. For most people, the primary goal of a fitness program is to improve one's appearance, and/or improve or maintain physical fitness. While a fitness-oriented program makes a sizable contribution to an individual's health, it fails to adequately address a key component of wellness – which is psychological health. Psychological health includes emotional health, optimistic and rational cognitive patterns, and healthy relationships. The perspective from which we view ourselves and the world around us is shaped by our psychological perspective. Ultimately, it is the psyche that determines

whether we view the glass as half empty or half full, and whether we consider our lives to be meaningful, productive and satisfying.

Though indications of poor physical fitness can often be readily assessed by appearance (poor muscle tone, poor posture, obesity) or through a few simple fitness assessment protocols, less than optimal mental health may not be easily recognizable, even to ourselves. For example, if we've lived our whole life with a negative attitude, we might not label our attitude as 'less than optimal' because we think that this negative attitude is simply a part of who we are. After all, it is characteristic of how and who we have always been, and it is familiar. Perhaps we have no idea how to make improvements in our attitude, or that any type of change in attitude is even possible. Indications of less than optimal psychological health are extremely common. They might manifest as an inability to sustain relationships, a poor self-image, a negative attitude, feeling stuck in a rut, lack of hope, acting out (inappropriate emotional outbursts), a need for revenge or domination, addictions to controlled substances, and other unhealthy habits, behaviors and attitudes.

In most health clubs, Mind-Body techniques are incorporated into the fitness experience. For example, during the recovery period at the end of a cycling class, the instructor may introduce the concepts of somatic awareness, releasing, relaxing, and restoration by focusing on the qualities of the breath and bodily sensations. Though a cycling class is not traditionally considered a Mind-Body program, the inclusion of the Mind-Body approach will enhance the program and help the participants understand how to transfer what they have learned from this experience into their daily lives. Because somatic awareness requires the first-person perspective, a fitness professional cannot anticipate and should not pre-judge what each individual will feel or how he will respond when working with Mind-Body techniques. This means that we cannot apply universal labels or standard expectations when working in the field of Mind-Body methods, for each individual's discoveries will be unique, special and personal. We must allow each participant the freedom to explore and make his or her own discoveries about the body, the psyche, connections, sensations, behaviors, and attitudes. In fact, an important part of the Mind-Body learning process involves the understanding that each of us owns our discoveries; these discoveries are the essential elements that constitute who we are as a unique individual.

There are five orientations or perspectives are commonly associated with yoga and other Mind-Body techniques. They are the Somatic orientation, the Psychological orientation, the Spiritual orientation, the Positive orientation, and the Empowerment orientation. You may choose to incorporate references to one, some, or all of these concepts into your existing fitness classes and training sessions.

Somatic orientation -By improving our somatic (the body experienced from the first-person sensory perspective) awareness, we learn to identify, examine, and release obstacles and learned limitations that exist within our bodies. The body houses valuable, innate wisdom that most of us overlook, ignore, or cannot access. In yoga, we focus on the somatic nature of the fitness program as a way to unlock the potential that resides within our bodies and ourselves. Examples of somatic guidelines:

- Use minimum effort to attain maximum results
- Work in the range of 'manageable discomfort'
- Try your best without trying too hard
- The key question is "What do I feel in my body? (What is my body telling me?)

Psychological orientation - In some ways, yoga is similar to body-oriented psychotherapies because we learn about our Selves by learning about our bodies. For example, we learn that suppressed sensation coexists with repressed trauma. Yoga can help us to gently access and release past wounds that may still be held within our bodies in the form of chronic pain, habitual tension, and sensorimotor amnesia (numbness).

Spiritual orientation - Though we should make no reference to any sort of religious doctrine during Mind-Body classes, it is perfectly acceptable to introduce a spiritual element (if appropriate for the population and facility). A brief, non-denominational inspirational reading during the final relaxation is a wonderful way to connect with spiritual awareness.

Positive orientation - Yoga and other Mind-Body techniques are a serious subject, but we can present them in a fun and accessible way. For example, positive features of the yoga experience include the following lessons: (1) work at an appropriate level, (2) cultivate a non-competitive manner, (3) gently seek improvements, and (4) maintain a sense of equanimity (confidence and composure). Though some participants will consider yoga postures to be difficult, painful and frustrating, a prudent instructor will find a way to transform the experience into a successful, manageable challenge. At the very least, all students should feel more relaxed, peaceful, and hopeful (i.e. open to possibilities) by the end of a class session. These are all positive attributes.

Empowerment orientation: Autonomy and Personal Transformation - In all types of Mind-Body programs the instructor should focus on teaching the students to self-sense, self-correct, and eventually, to self-generate. This is what makes a Mind-Body fitness program valuable, especially for stress education. What the participants are really learning is autonomy and independence by cultivating valid coping skills.

### *Features of Somatic-based Education used in Mind-Body Techniques:*

- Proper alignment (for safety and effectiveness)
- Mindfulness
- Enhanced awareness (enriching and improving the capacity of mindfulness)
- Breathing inquiries (the best and simplest technique for stress reduction)
- Sensory discrimination (learning to filter out unnecessary distractions so that we can focus on the task at hand)
- Positive orientation (affirmations, experiencing success, confidence, composure)

A fitness program that features Mind-Body techniques will emphasize the following four basic principles:

1. Non-competition
2. Stress reduction
3. Getting to know your Self by getting to know your body
4. Making improvements in any or every aspect of your life (body, mind, spirit)