



## Yoga Basics

By Coral R. Taylor, RYT

Have you heard about yoga, but don't really know what it is? Are you interested in trying it out but aren't sure if it's right for you/what it entails/don't want to "look stupid" in front of other people who already know how to do it/have an injury you don't want to aggravate? If so, attending a Yoga Basics Workshop at the Tahoe Forest Center for Health can be a good first step to learning more about yoga and how it can help you! Below are some FAQs on this topic.

### What is Yoga?

Yoga is a mind and body practice, developed in India over 5,000 years ago. The physical aspect of yoga includes *asanas* (poses) and *pranayama* (breathwork). Meditation is one of the mental/spiritual aspects of yoga. In a typical yoga class, the poses are coupled with breathwork, as a form of movement.

### Who can do yoga? Is it only for flexible people?

Yoga is a practice that **any person**, regardless of age, mobility, flexibility, strength, gender, race or religious belief, can use to realize their full potential. Yoga is for everyone, for every body. It is not just for flexible people; in fact, people who have limited flexibility and mobility are encouraged to use this practice to improve flexibility.

### What are the benefits of yoga?

Some of the benefits of yoga are increased strength and flexibility, body awareness, improved focus, better sleep, less tension, and increased overall emotional relaxation. Through the practice of yoga, the nervous system is encouraged to transition from the sympathetic state (when we are switched on, or in a fight-or-flight response) and into the para-sympathetic state (when we are switched off), which allows the body to direct its resources to functions such as rest, digestion, healing, immunity, and fertility. For those with chronic or acute pain, yoga can also be used to lessen the effects of pain, both physically and psychologically.

As March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month, it is helpful to know that yoga can facilitate digestive and gut health. This can occur through the practice of specific *asanas*, such as twists, as well as through the shift to the para-sympathetic nervous system.

March is also Brain Injury Awareness Month; yoga can be a useful tool for those recovering from a brain injury. Often, a brain injury can cause challenges with balance, body awareness, coordination, and focus, which the *asana* practice can help improve. Healing from these injuries can also be assisted by encouraging the nervous system to switch to the parasympathetic state, where healing and rest occur.



### **What will I learn in the Yoga Basics Workshop?**

Some of fundamental poses will be taught to students, to familiarize beginners with the shapes and names. Students will be introduced to typical props (blocks, strap, bolster) which may be found in a yoga class and will learn to use these props for various poses, as appropriate for their own body. Goals of the workshop are that students will:

- Learn the basic yoga poses and how to execute them safely and comfortably for their body.
- Learn the fundamentals of yoga in a safe, non-competitive environment, with other beginners.
- Be able to attend group exercise yoga classes, with a new familiarity of the frequently used poses.

### **What do I need to bring? What should I wear?**

Students should wear comfortable clothes they can exercise in, specifically with a comfortable waistband (many poses involve folding forward). Socks are typically not worn in a yoga class, so no specific footwear is required. All other props (yoga mats, yoga blocks, yoga straps) will be provided by the Tahoe Forest Center for Health.

### **Key information:**

- Cost: \$30
- Dates:
  - o Thursday March 12, 2020 – 5:30-7:30 pm
  - o Thursday April 16, 2020 – 5:30-7:30 pm

### **How can I get more information? How can I register?**

Please call (530) 587-3769 or email [wellness@tfhd.com](mailto:wellness@tfhd.com)

### **References:**

1. Farhi, Donna (2000). *Yoga: Mind, Body & Spirit*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
2. Stiles, Mukunda (2000). *Structural Yoga Therapy: Adapting to the Individual*. San Francisco, CA: Weiser Books.