

# WHAT IS BIKRAM YOGA?

Bikram Choudhury is an internationally renowned yoga teacher from India who has taught over three million students. He brought his system to the United States in 1971 at the invitation of the American Medical Association.

Bikram's yoga is a routine of 26 poses which works the whole body in 90 minutes. The poses work synergistically and cumulatively to return the body to a balanced state. The yoga builds energy, stamina and flexibility. It incorporates strength, challenge, gravity, balancing and most importantly the tourniquet effect. This technique allows the stretching, squeezing and massaging of the internal organs, flushing out the cardiovascular system and stimulating the endocrine and nervous systems in order to release any deficient hormones and enzymes. The body is self-regulating and self-adjusting.

## A Regular Yoga Practice:

- Regulates cholesterol in the blood
- Supplies oxygen and nutrients to parts of the body that have been blocked or stagnant
- Eliminates toxins
- Flushes the lymphatic system
- Strengthens the immune system
- Balances the endocrine glands
- Improves the spine's flexibility and health
- Expands lung capacity and strengthens the heart
- Lubricates joints
- Strengthens bones
- Stretches and tones the muscles

As we age our muscles tend to get stiffer, creating more pressure on the joints. By regular stretching, we prevent this gradual stiffening and joint deterioration and that is why yoga has a rejuvenating effect. Through a regular workout, we liberate a vast amount of energy which we can use in our daily life to feel more alive and self fulfilled. We look, move, and feel younger.

In a three year research project at the Tokyo University Hospital, Bikram helped doctors prove that yoga regenerates tissues and thus helps cure chronic ailments.

The routine is dynamic and exhilarating. The room is intentionally warm so that your muscles will stretch more easily. The series works equally well for beginning as well as advanced students. Bikram says: "Never too late, never too old, never too bad, and never too sick to do yoga and start from scratch again."

Wear light stretch clothing, shorts, tank top or swimsuit. Bring a large towel and a small towel and bottled water. Some days you won't feel like coming at all - these are the days that yoga will benefit you the most. Yoga "house cleans" your body, mind, and habits. Expect Results!

# Seven Reasons for the Heat

1. Enhances vasodilatation so that more blood is delivered to the muscles. This means that the capillaries that weave around the muscles respond to the heat by dilation. This brings more oxygen to the muscles and helps in the removal of waste products such as carbon dioxide and lactic acid.
2. Allows oxygen in the blood to detach from the hemoglobin more easily. When blood passes through warm muscles, oxygen releases more easily from the hemoglobin. Blood passing through cold muscles releases less oxygen.
3. Speeds up the breakdown of glucose and fatty acids.
4. Makes muscles more elastic, less susceptible to injury.
5. Improves coordination.
6. Reduces heart irregularities associated with sudden exercise.
7. Burns fat more easily. Warmed muscles burn fat more easily than cold ones. Fat is released during stress. The stress of intense exercise causes a deluge of fatty acids into the blood stream. If you exercise with cold muscles, they can't use the fatty acids, and they end up in places where they aren't wanted, such as in the lining of your arteries.

**Note:** Muscles aren't the only beneficiaries of heat. Higher temperatures improve the function of the nervous system, meaning that messages are carried more rapidly to and from the brain or spinal cord. Warm muscles are more elastic and are less susceptible to injury. Warmer temperatures produce a more fluid stretch, allowing for a greater range of motion. Cold muscles don't absorb shock and impact as well and do not stretch as easily, so cold muscles get injured more readily.

(Excerpt from 'Smart Exercise' by Covert Bailey)

# ENERGY

Some days we feel stronger than others but we come to Yoga anyway. We come with an open mind and a willingness to listen to our bodies and adjust our Yoga Practice as needed. When we agree to participate in a Yoga class we are agreeing to be a part of a communal experience. Although our primary responsibility is to take care of ourselves, we also play a part in the overall energy of the class. Every single person makes a difference and the cumulative effect of everyone's actions and thoughts has an impact on the Class Energy. We want everyone to continue to have great Yoga experiences and because of that we have some suggestions/requests so as to create the best possible Class Energy.

## CLASS ENERGY TIPS

- Please stay with the flow of the class. Listen to the teacher. Please enter each posture together as a class. If you need to come out of the posture either rest in Mountain Pose/Savasana or re-enter the posture.
- Excessive movement in between postures wastes your own energy and disrupts the Group Energy.
- If you know in advance that you need to leave early please position yourself for easy exit and try not to disrupt the class during your departure.
- If you enter late please do the posture that is being done by the Class at that time.
- Position your mats with courtesy and awareness of your neighbors. Also, realize that it's ok not to see yourself in the mirror and that it's an opportunity to practice more by feel.
- Please do your best to stay in the room and relax on your back if necessary. You receive great benefits just by focusing on your breathing.
- In smaller classes please come closer towards the front and/or center. Your energy matters! Your own practice and the entire class benefits from each others energy.
- Remember that a great yoga practice has nothing to do with how deep you go in each posture. What matters are things such as Breath, Focus and Awareness. In the Postures we strive for Stability, Intensity and Calmness.
- Try not to judge yourself as mental energy does affect the class dynamic. Be as positive and as supportive to yourself as possible. If you have a lot on your mind... just Breathe.
- The more focused each practitioner is the more energetic and powerful the class. The less expectations the better. You are different every time you come to class so be open to possibility!