

TEN TYPES OF YOGA PRACTICES

There are many ideas out there about what a yoga practice should look like: some believe that it's only valid if it has a spiritual component, others focus on strictly physical benefits. In reality, it depends on the situation, the student and the intention. An appropriate yoga practice can facilitate change on any level – physical, physiological, spiritual - but that doesn't mean that every practice should have all those elements present. Sometimes it IS just about the body. Other times it IS all about connecting to something greater. What makes it a yoga practice is mindful movement and deep connection to the breath.

In addition, every yoga practice must be purposeful. Here are some common types of practices based on the things that we want to accomplish:



GENERAL YOGA PRACTICE (IS USUALLY USED FOR “FLOSSING”)

This is about moving the spine and most joints through the full range of motion, attending to most body parts without focusing on anything specific, deepening the breath and focusing the mind. The purpose here is to work toward overall balance.



FLOW PRACTICE (LINKS POSES INTO “FLOWS”)

The Sun Salutation sequence is often the base of the flow practice, but it doesn't have to be. Flow practices tend to be more challenging, mostly because of the pace, and often put repetitive stress on the joints (shoulders, hips, wrists), if not sequenced mindfully.



GOAL POSTURE PRACTICE (PREPARES FOR ANY COMPLEX POSTURE)

This is about selecting a more difficult posture and then organizing the entire practice to prepare and compensate for it. The goal posture might work a specific body area, move the energy in a certain way, represent some idea, or challenge the body in a different way.



BODY PART-SPECIFIC PRACTICE (TARGETS NECK, LOWER BACK, HIPS, ETC.)

This addresses a specific part of the body. There can be emphasis on stretching or strengthening the area and sequencing is EXTREMELY important here if we want the practice to be effective and safe.



PRACTICE FOR A SPECIFIC ACTIVITY (FOR GARDENING, SKIING, HIKING, LONG CAR DRIVES)

This is designed either to prepare the body for an activity or compensate for the activity afterwards. These practices involve analyzing the biomechanics of the activity and need to be short and specific.



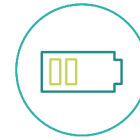
POPULATION-SPECIFIC PRACTICE (FOR PREGNANT WOMEN, SENIORS)

This is designed to serve a specific group of students. We begin by analyzing the unique challenges of the students in a group and then design yoga practice(s) that meet their needs.



BREATH-CENTERED PRACTICE (AFFECTS PHYSIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING)

This type of practice is essential if we want to address issues with sleep, stress and energy. Here, breath adaptation and/or pranayama become central, which means that all other elements should be less complex and work to support the main element.



ENERGY-CENTERED PRACTICE (BUILDS OR REDUCES ENERGY)

This can be an energy-building practice (brhmana) or a practice that will eliminate/reduce excess energy (langhana). Working with breath is central to this type of practice, as is choosing specific yogic elements that have brhmana/langhana qualities.



INTEGRATIVE YOGA PRACTICE (IMPACTS THE STUDENT ON SEVERAL LAYERS)

Integrative practice might include chanting, meditation, visualization, ritual or prayer. Designed skillfully, they have the potential to affect the student in a more profound way, because they reach across multiple levels of the human system.



THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE (ADDRESSES SPECIFIC PHYSICAL, PHYSIOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL ISSUES)

Since they are mostly created for vulnerable students with serious health challenges, teachers usually require advanced training to be able to design and teach safe and effective therapeutic practices.