

Real Dudes Do Yoga

Written by Shelley Lowther
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Despite reading about the astounding benefits of yoga, many guys are still sitting on the proverbial yoga fence. I mean, do real dudes do yoga? Isn't yoga easy, and just for chicks? The truth is, yoga can be challenging, difficult and cause you to break into a sweat. And if you're brave enough to break out of the box and try a class, it's not just for girls.

Most of the ancient yogis were men. Yoga has really only opened up to women in the last half of the twentieth century, although most studios in the US today are filled with women. Yoga is a healthy activity that you can enjoy with your wife or girlfriend. It can make you both calmer, more grounded and give you more energy for other things. If you are single, the girl-to-guy ratio will be highly slanted in your favor, and yoga is a lot cheaper (and healthier) than Happy Hour. Here are a few more reasons to practice yoga:

- Competitive sports and intense fitness routines are hard on the body. Yoga can help undo some of the damage, and prevent further injuries. You need yoga if you regularly run, cycle, swim, golf or join a pick-up basketball game. Yoga can improve your time, your swing, and maybe even your jump shot.

- Yoga will increase your upper body strength. A few rounds of Sun Salutations can rival most fitness routines, and learning the perfect chaturanga or building a headstand can be a real challenge. You'll likely want to keep your fitness routine, but yoga may convert you from Gym Rat to yoga mat.

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- Yoga will increase your core strength. Every asana, or pose, will utilize your core, and as you learn more challenging poses, you will learn to access that core strength like never before. Adding yoga to your routine will amplify your results, making you leaner and stronger than you likely thought possible. Bye-bye crunches, hello six pack!

- Yoga can teach Stress Management. My husband internalizes his stress. He works hard, and often does not have the time to unwind. When he practices yoga, at home or in a class, he is more relaxed, happy and energized. Men tend to internalize stress more than women do, and letting go of tension can be a real battle. Yoga can teach you to be in the moment, and to let go.

- Other dudes do yoga. This is probably the most important thing to most guys, right after the women. There are some pretty famous yogi-dudes out there, and some might surprise you. Sting and his wife Trudy Styler are both long-practicing yogis, and actor Matthew McConaughey and Russell Simmons of "Def Comedy Jam" have added yoga to their fitness routines. Footballers on both sides of the pond have even taken the plunge. If you want to tackle the gridiron with the Chicago Bears or bend it like Beckham, you might need to roll out a yoga mat.

The hardest part is taking the first step and going to a class. Consider a beginner's class if you have any health or back issues, or try an Asana for Athletes or a Hot Yoga class if you have an established fitness routine. You know yoga is good for you. Now the only question is, are you man enough?

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