

The Benefits of Including Yoga in Your Exercise Routine

Yoga - a form of exercise which increases flexibility, strength, body awareness and clarity both physically and mentally.

I must say I am not a natural yogi, but I do enjoy a good yoga session. When I was a dancer, my flexibility was amazing. As soon as I stopped dancing, flexibility disappeared also. The saying 'use it or lose it' is very true. Flexibility is super important for mobility and injury prevention. One of the key benefits of yoga is increased flexibility and increased range of motion through the joints. Yoga helps to elongate the muscles which really helps after a resistance training session, which tends to shorten the muscles. You may also find that those knee pains or back pains you used to get, become less, the more you do yoga, because it is helping release tension around the joints and provide free movement. Now im not saying one yoga session is going to turn you into a stretchy, elastic human, but if you stick with it and make it part of your weekly routine, you will gradually see the improvements and you will never look back.

If that alone isn't enough to add some yoga to your life, how about these other benefits:

- Better posture - strengthen the core postural muscles and loosen tight hip flexors or hamstrings to help you stand tall, with perfect posture.



- Muscle tone and endurance - every tried to hold warrior 3 pose for a long time? This pose uses every muscle in the body. Legs, core, back, shoulders, it's intense. Hold that for 30 seconds or more and I can guarantee your body will feel it. Every pose targets a different set of muscles giving you a great all over body strength and endurance session.

- Body awareness and breathing - I am constantly reminding people to breathe during their exercises, especially holding a plank. Breathing is so important. Obviously because we need it to survive. But to control your breathing during exercise is a skill, sounds funny considering we have been breathing all our lives, but it really is a skill we need to learn to do when pairing it with exercise. Yoga is AMAZING and teaching you to do this. It builds your awareness with your body and your breathing. It teaches you to take deep breathes and not to hold your breath.

- Reduces stress - the relaxation techniques used in yoga can help reduce stress. Slows life down, allows you to breathe, relax and focus on the mind and the body.

Yoga combines strengthening and stretching poses with deep breathing and relaxation to give a you a total mind-body workout. Done a few times a week and you will soon see the amazing benefits yoga has to offer. Go on, give it a go!