

Is Ashtanga Yoga Right for You?

Founded by K. Pattabhi Jois, Ashtanga Yoga is also called Eight Limb Yoga. In this form of yoga, the road to purification is said to be formed of eight different spiritual practices. The first four "limbs" of Ashtanga Yoga are Asana, Pranayama, Yama, and Niyama. These practices are meant to cleanse, and are called external practices. The other four spiritual practices in Ashtanga Yoga are internal practices.

It is said that only properly applying the method of Ashtanga Yoga will enable the practitioner to fully utilize these eight spiritual practices. It's also been said that improper practice of this kind of yoga can be mentally dangerous. It's necessary for practitioners to be strong in body and mind. If bodies are weak, or sensory organs damaged, this type of yoga practice will not be useful. It's vital to make sure that your body is strong and healthy, so that the maximum benefit can be received from Ashtanga Yoga practices.

Vinsaya is one element that differentiates Ashtanga Yoga from other types of yoga practice. Vinsaya refers to movements and breathing exercises used in the process of internal cleansing. Each movement must be accompanied by a single breath. It's important to remember that sweating, in this context, is good. Sweat is an important feature of Vinsaya, since the production of it means the practice is being applied successfully.

The performance of the asanas causes your body to produce heat. This heat allows the toxins that have built up inside us to be excreted, in the form of sweat. Thus, the more we sweat, the better we're able to release those toxins and cleanse our bodies.

Yoga poses are used to help improve bodily health and develop strength. There are three basic postures used in Ashtanga Yoga, and they're categorized into three different levels. The first is called the Primary Series. This series concentrates on aligning and detoxifying our bodies. The second category is called the Intermediate Series. It focuses on the opening and cleansing of our energy channels. This is important for the purification of the nervous system. The last series is referred to as the Advanced Series, and helps to improve strength and grace.

Another important principle is Tristhana. This represents the union of the three locations of attention and action: posture, breathing techniques, and "Dristhi of the Looking Place". Dristhi are described as points of focus or attention, used while performing Asana. They enable the purification and stabilization of the mind. These three locations are meant to work together to perform a function.

Techniques for breathing are both synchronized and simultaneous. Remember, each movement comes with only a single breath. In Ashtanga Yoga, the primary breathing technique used is Ujjayi Breathing. The application of this technique gets longer each time you practice. This means making sure that you can hold each pose, and your breath, a little longer. These breathing exercises add strength to our nervous systems and increase willpower and the "internal fire". Practitioners of Ashtanga, or Eight Limb Yoga, state that this is the best, or only way to clear and cleanse the mind.

About the Author

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