



# *yoga* for the *soul*

Cy-Fairians Discover The  
Health Benefits of Yoga

Written by Lorrie Crow  
Select photos by Marisa Hugonnett



Stretching at Body and Brain Yoga

Photo by Marisa Hugonnett



Adho Mukha Svanasana is also known as the downward facing dog pose

To some, it might look like the game, “Twister”, with “right hand on red” and “left foot on green”, but to others, it is the solution to mental and spiritual well-being. Welcome to the world of yoga, which means “union” in Sanskrit, the language of ancient India from where yoga was originally practiced.

According to the American Yoga Association, the whole system of yoga is built on three main structures: exercise, breathing, and meditation. There are over 100 different schools of yoga, so how to choose the right one for you?

### *Finding Your Focus*

Elizabeth Nuno, a Cypress yoga instructor and writer, advises persons to ask themselves why they want to take yoga. “For example, do you want to gain flexibility? Looking for a stress release or low-impact activities?” asks Nuno. “After you decide, then go to a basic yoga class. Yoga is a personal journey, in a non-competitive atmosphere.”

One type of yoga, offered by Pam Rasch of Body + Brain Holistic Yoga in Cypress, focuses on meridian stretching. “At Body + Brain, we are promoting health and wellness through all types of mind/ body training, including acupressure, tai chi, dynamic meditation, lifestyle training, and personal health coaching,” says Rasch.

Rasch emphasizes that, although yoga classes vary and the approach to training may differ slightly, a complete program of stretching, postures, breath work, and meditation is needed to obtain optimal results from the practice of yoga.

Nuno agrees. “No one ever told me being home with children (sons Christian, age 2, and Cruz, 17 months) would be the hardest days of my life,” she says. “Yoga brings concentration and focus back to things that are important to me.”

### *Yoga for All Ages*

So, how often should people practice yoga to get the full benefits? Rasch believes the perfect practice is one that incorporates the

principles of practice into daily life. “For example, morning stretches, mid-afternoon exercise, and evening meditation” is ideal, says Rasch.

*“Yoga brings concentration and focus back to things that are important to me.”*

-Elizabeth Nuno

But both Rasch and Nuno concur that three classes a week can be optimal to receive the best benefit and establish healthy habits the quickest.

Some people believe they are too old or not fit enough to practice yoga. Not true, says Rasch. “Almost no one is fit at first,” she emphasizes. “Yoga is a personal wellness practice that can be practiced from ages 1 to 101 and beyond. My youngest student was four and my oldest student is 93. Truly, it is never too early or too late to know yourself.”

### *One Solution Fits All*

Yoga is also offered to persons with special needs and for cancer patients and senior citizens. In fact, Rasch believes “the more severe the disability, the greater the potential for a person to improve. I have worked with people who have had strokes, heart attacks, major orthopedic injuries, and surgeries, and people who are autistic or have other mental handicaps,” she says.

Nuno, who faithfully practiced yoga throughout both of her pregnancies, adds that when you have a good teacher, everyone can be guided through the postures, so it is still challenging for those experienced and the ones who are beginning the practice.

### *Amazing Health Benefits*

The health benefits of yoga extend further than that, though, to also include improved posture, muscle tone and flexibility. Stretches incorporated into the ancient practice can help release a

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### **BODY + BRAIN HOLISTIC YOGA**

13203 FRY RD.  
281-213-8484

### **CRANK IT UP FITNESS**

12547 GRANT RD.  
832-244-2317

### **CYPRESS CREEK FAMILY YMCA**

19915 HWY. 249  
281-469-1481

### **DAH N YOGA**

12020 FM 1960 W #420  
832-237-9642

### **GOLD'S GYM**

16211 CLAY RD.  
832-593-9333

### **TEXAS YOGA CENTER**

7620 CHERRY PARK DR.  
281-859-5566

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build-up of lactic acid in a person's muscles, easing any pain that may be associated with tight muscles and energizing the body, according to WebMD. Additionally, yoga emphasizes proper breathing throughout stretches and positions. Learning to lengthen one's breath can lead to greater relaxation as the practice is carried over into all aspects of one's life. The increase in oxygen can lift a person's mood and may even help alleviate some of the symptoms associated with depression, according to WebMD. For those suffering from hypertension to those wanting to slow down from the everyday hustle and bustle, yoga can both relax and improve symptoms of stress.

*"In four months, I had lost 25 pounds; in six months, my headaches were completely gone; and in one year, my back pain was gone."*

- Pam Rasch

### *Don't Worry, Be Happy*

Since she took her first class in college 10 years ago, Nuno says the benefits of teaching yoga includes the opportunity to remove herself from all the news, to leave everything outside, and focus on herself for whatever length of time she has to practice. "When I leave, I feel more relaxed and calm," she says. "When I work from home, I sometimes get on the floor and do some stretching; then I am ready to get back up and work again."

Rasch says when she began her practice she was 25 pounds overweight with chronic back pain, recurrent migraines, and poorly managed stress that was creating interpersonal conflict in her family. "In four months, I had lost 25 pounds; in six months, my headaches were completely gone; and in one year, my back pain was gone," she says.

Nuno did not originally plan to become an instructor. "A lot of yoga instructors never intended on becoming a teacher; it just happens," she says. "You end up being passionate and love it and want to share it with other people."

Everyone can benefit from yoga training, Rasch says. "I personally do not let a day pass without practice, and I feel so blessed to now spend my time helping others to achieve the same results." - CFM

*LORRIE CROW is a Cypress freelance writer who never liked the game "Twister" but plans to enroll in a yoga class in the future.*

