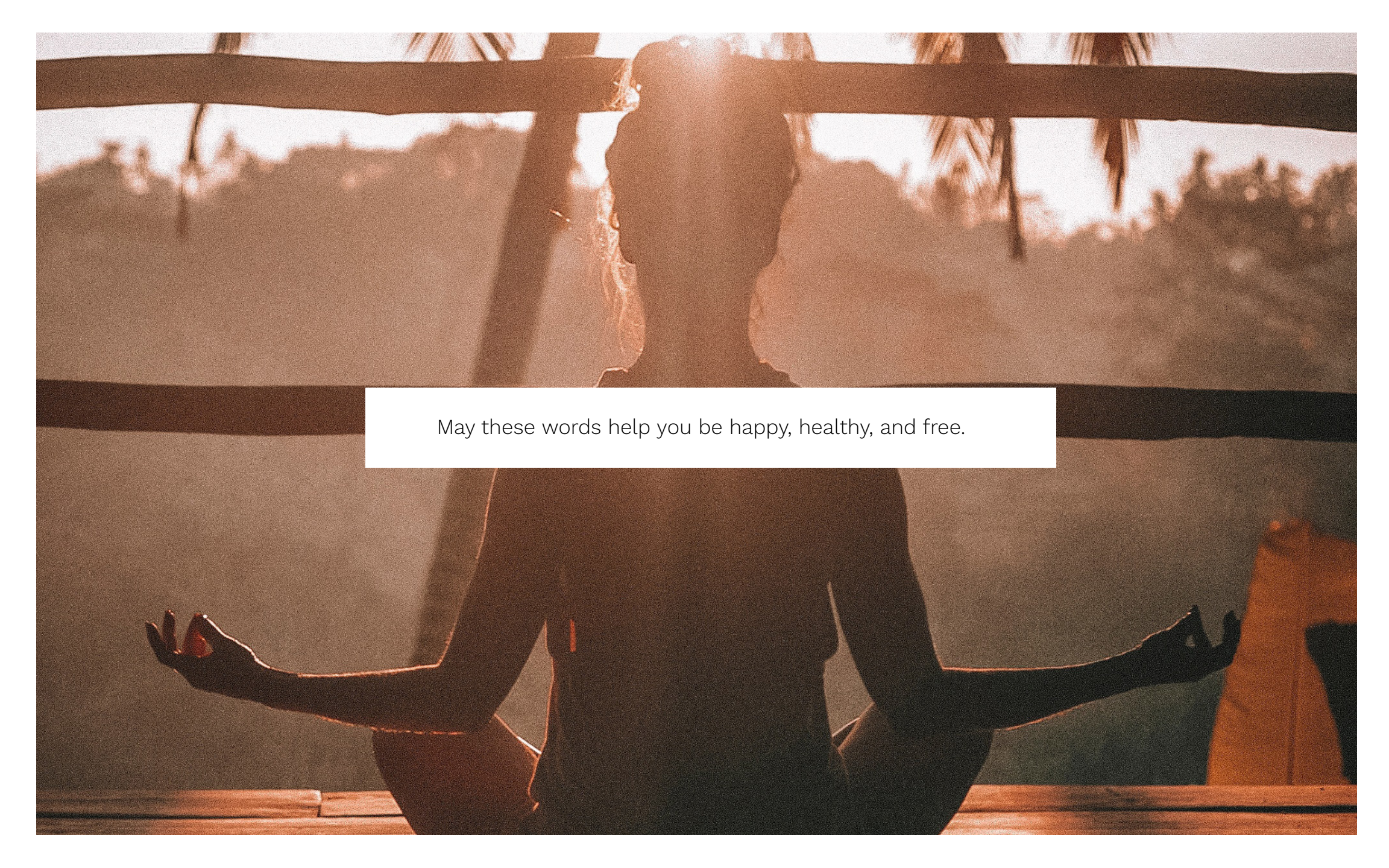


Living with Balance

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOGIC LIFESTYLE



EAST + WEST

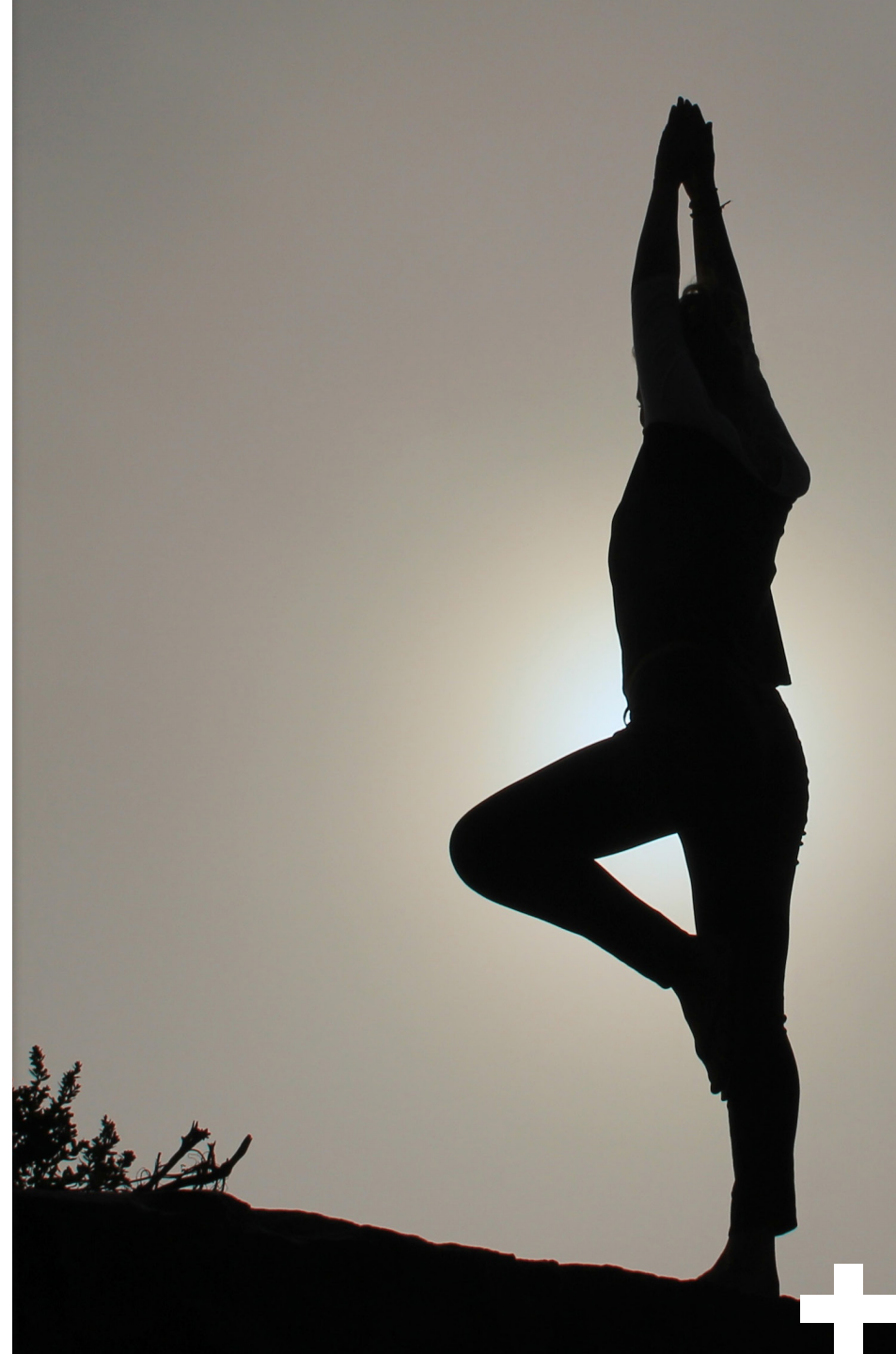
A person is shown in silhouette, sitting in a meditative pose on a wooden deck. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden light illuminating the background. The person's arms are extended horizontally, and their hands are in a mudra. The background features a railing and palm trees, suggesting a tropical or coastal setting. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

May these words help you be happy, healthy, and free.

Welcome To The World of Yoga

Namaste dear friend. It is our deepest pleasure to welcome you to the beautiful inner world of yoga. This journey will be one of the most meaningful experiences of your life. On behalf of our entire team, we would like to humbly express our gratitude for allowing us to guide you.

This short book was meticulously crafted by our masterful teachers at East+West. It was created to help you begin living a life of true, sustained balance, and sharing the joyous spirit of yoga everywhere you go.



What To Expect

Imagine for a moment that you grew up in rural India, without access to internet, cars, or even electricity. Next, imagine that one day you were spontaneously dropped in the middle of Times Square New York. Smartphones, skyscrapers, 100-foot televisions. You'd likely be awestruck, blown away by the sheer accomplishment of it all.

Experiencing the world of Yoga for the first time is similar, only the accomplishment lies in the understanding of the inner-world -- the workings of the mind and body. Learning yoga is like digging for a pyramid buried in the sand, the more you dig the more vast it becomes. The teachings are intricate, precise, and utterly powerful. Within them, you can find answers to life's deepest, most pressing questions. These tools have the power to transform lives, relieve mental disorders, and even reverse "incurable" diseases. It reveals a world where what you eat, how you live, and how you move propels you towards new heights of existence, rather than deadening you to it. This is the ambitious promise of yoga, and as students ourselves, we can attest to it really working. It is difficult to fully convey the depth and power of this inner-world to you in words. I am confident, however, that you can begin experiencing it for yourself.

Our goal for you is to develop practical, daily life tools to live a, balanced, productive life, sustainably. These are not idle ambitions, our students experience this regularly.

Nevertheless, our program matters less than your vision and motivation. So think of us as guides, not teachers. What we will provide you are not marching orders but a toolkit. We can give you the chisel, the hammer, and the wedge but only you can be the sculptor. With it, you can create your own beautiful sculpture of life.

Yoga in the west has been contextualized as a physical practice. This manual will introduce you to yoga as a whole-life system that will touch on every aspect of life. And this is only a brief introduction. Yoga is a life-long journey, to which there is no end. The beauty is getting swept up in the process of continuous learning and deepening. When approached this way, yoga begins to sink deep down into your heart, it changes the way you see and think and feel. And while it cannot remove us from all difficulties in life, it alters our grain of reality, raises us above the surface of life and allows us to know who we truly are. To know yoga is to know something eternal, it exists inside you and you will carry it wherever you go. This is a gift, the greatest gift, and no one can take it away from you.



What Is Yoga?

Before we begin, it's important that you understand what yoga is on a basic level, as it is often misinterpreted. The word Yoga has a few meanings; in Sanskrit it literally means "union." This describes a states of living where life feels effortless, balanced, and simply fulfilling. We have all experienced this at times, but often only in brief spurts before the events of life throw us off again. The purpose of yoga is to make this joyful experience more stable in our life. And the practices are like a glue that bind us to this. Simple, right?

Learning yoga is a different process than learning in school. Yoga was invented to enhance our experience of life, and thus it must be experienced directly to be known. Books and philosophies can give us inspiration and guidance, but to truly understand yoga you must experience it directly for yourself by feeling it happening in your own life.



That's where the daily practices will come in. They will help you begin to experience the amazing energies of yoga running through your body. They have been developed and refined over centuries by the ancient yogi's who lived in incredibly attuned states of being. We've simplified them for you here so you can begin right away.

These ancient guidelines work like natural law. If you plant the seed of a mango tree, a mango tree will grow every time. If you follow these guidelines, happiness and ease of living will naturally follow. Trust in this, it will serve you mightily in your life.

Above all yoga is the process of learning to simply enjoy life again. Enjoy this process so much that you enjoy even your failures and deviations. If you make an honest effort with small improvements regularly, beautiful results will surely follow.

“To learn the path of yoga, you must become the path of yoga.”



Life is to be enjoyed. That's it.



Getting To Know Yourself

The end goal of yoga is rather simple, obvious even - happiness, health, & joy. However, the path to getting there is different for everyone.

THE BODY:

Let's begin by first understanding your basic body type and the environmental factors that shape it. This will help you intelligently guide yourself as you begin designing a lifestyle routine. To do so, step outside yourself for a moment and imagine you were observing yourself from the perspective of another.

How would you classify your body? Would you describe it as strong, or frail? Tight, or loose? Balanced, or unstable? Grounded, or airy? Expressive, or constrained? Energized, or blocked? Take some time and describe your body to yourself out loud, or write it in a journal. Start with obvious insights, then see if you can get more and more subtle. Do your hips tend to be tight? Do you tend to have a hard time balancing? How do you breathe? Is it long, slow, and relaxed? Or tight and constricted? What do the back of your knees feel like?

WHAT CONDITIONS AND EVENTS ARE SHAPING YOUR BODY?

What are you putting in your body on a given day? How many meals are you eating? What type of food? Are you consuming drugs or alcohol? What do you spend most of your time doing? What postures is your body assuming throughout the day? Are you sitting in an office? Walking? Driving? What is the environment you live in like? Is it a natural, peaceful environment, or is there constantly stimulation happening?

Consider the following: the conditions of your life are unique only to you, and what is considered "normal" is very different for everyone. The way your body is formed, and your current state of being is not random. Everything is subject to the laws of cause and effect, and your body is no exception. It has taken this form from the conditions you put around it; the food you eat, the way you move, and the environment you live in. That means that by controlling your environment, there is literally limitless potential for you to transform your body to your desired effect. For now, just notice and perhaps write down what is going on in the environment of your life, and try to draw connections to your body. Perhaps create a little journal for yourself. Make a habit of doing this regularly.



It's important to understand that there is no right or wrong body type. A wise yogi knows and accepts their own body just as it is, treating it as the most sacred temple. In this process you will learn to love your body and life just as it is.

THE MIND:

It is equally important in this process to get to know the inner workings of your mind and internal state of being. Again stepping outside yourself, take a quick inventory of your mind, what thoughts (good or bad) consume most of your day? Do you tend to think about work? Relationships, your body, your appearance?

What does your internal energy feel like? Do you feel energized and inspired? Dull and lifeless? Do you enjoy your own company? Do you find when you return home at the end of the day you find ease? Do you find it easy to connect with your friends or partner?

Say your answers out loud to yourself, or write them down in your journal.

“The first priority is to accept yourself just as you are.”



Like your physical body, your thoughts are also a direct result of the environment you live in. The connections between your environment and your mind, however, are so subtle that we often miss them. And similarly, there is limitless potential to transform the inner state of your mind. Yoga will help you build awareness of these connections so you can shape and balance your life accordingly.

While noticing your thoughts and internal state, do not make an enemy of anything, it's enough simply to step outside yourself and observe.

Now that you've gotten to know your body & mind a little better, we can move into creating your daily yogic routine. In this process, you will begin learning how to masterfully cultivate the environment of your life to build the beautiful sculpture of your life.

“The body and mind are deeply connected to your living environment.”



Developing Your Practice

Creating a routine of regular practice is the core aspect of yogic life. These preparations will help you begin working intelligently with your environment. Created by the ancient yogis, these are foolproof guidelines that ensure you states of balance and ease. We have dramatically simplified them here for you so you can begin right away. They will enhance your experience of life significantly.

What you do is less important than the commitment you make to yourself to maintain consistency. When designing your preparations and routine, be sure to make commitments you can maintain, always challenging yourself just slightly. Do not try to take anything to the extreme, as it will only build frustration. Be compassionate and gentle with yourself, accepting the realities of your current life.



Eating

Physical
Practice

Meditation

Daily Life

Eating

The ancient yogis so acutely noticed that it is impossible to experience balance if you are consuming certain types of unnatural, processed or unhealthy foods, or overeating.

As much as possible, make your diet up of whole, plant foods. A good guideline to follow is that if you could not pick it up and eat it in its whole, natural state, or with very light preparation, you should not be eating it. If it needs to go through a factory before you can eat it, it is not a food you need to consume. We strongly encourage adopting a vegetarian diet as this is a central tenet of yogic philosophy. Meat takes a long time to digest and can rot in your intestines, creating toxicity. Eat light, so your stomach is only 80% full during meals. This will help you stay consistently energized.

We suggest avoiding drinking alcohol & drugs. Although they can have relieving properties in the short-term, these chemicals have very subtle effects on your energetic and mental states, which in the long-term create harmful patterns in the body and mind.

If you feel the urge at any time to consume harmful foods or chemicals, do one thing: Stop, take a long breathe in and hold it for 10-15 seconds. This simple exercise will help you regain conscious control of your habits.



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Physical Practice

Make a commitment to practice yoga at least 3 times a week for at minimum of one hour. We suggest avoiding doing any intense weight-lifting or highly strenuous workouts like crossfit. Light jogging and hiking in nature can also be a good exercise to support your practice.

Every body is unique, and needs a different care regimen to keep it in balance. When seeking balance in your physical practice, you will gain the most by focusing attention on your weaker areas. If you have a tight, rigid body, perhaps direct your preparations towards a slow, deep, meditative practice with stretching. If you are a frail body, direct your preparations towards strengthening yourself in the poses. Always follow what will make you feel the most energized, not depleted, at the end of your practice.

Many beginning practitioners make the mistake of focusing their practice on things they already excel at. For example a student strong in the upper body may focus on handstands and do many chaturangas. Or a flexible student may focus only on deep stretches and advanced poses, as that feels most rewarding. Resist the temptation to fall into habits, and instead allow your deeper intuition to guide your practice towards your highest ease and enjoyment of your body. Your physical practice should always make you feel more at ease in your body.

Make sure that no matter what, you are dedicating a little time every day to your physical body, even if just for 15 minutes. A great, simple routine to develop is doing 10 light sun salutations first thing in the morning. This simple habit can do wonders!



Eating

Physical
Practice

Meditation

Daily Life

Meditation

Make a regular habit of meditating by sitting comfortably in silence for at least 10 minutes every morning when you wake up, and right before you go to bed. Meditation is the simplest action in life. It is your time to simply enjoy living in a human body. That's it. Any technique and posture that involves sitting silently and makes you feel at ease is fine. It may change day to day, so follow your intuition, always feeling deeply into your body.

Meditation can be hard in the modern world, especially for those living in cities with stressful lives and constant stimulation. For this reason, it is very helpful to do some cathartic or emotional release exercises before you meditate. Shake your body out, dance around, loosen up your spine! This will help you sit more gently. It can be a great practice to meditate after your morning rounds of sun salutations.



Eating

Physical
Practice

Meditation

Daily Life

Daily Life

Daily life will start to become balanced and full of joy when unnecessary distractions are removed. When you are at work, keep your full attention there. When you are with friends or your partner, be fully present with them. Making this a habit will begin to clear your mind. This is how you can begin bringing ease and balance into all aspects of your life. You might say the practices are the seeds and this is the flowering -- the whole point of it all.

We understand this can be difficult in the modern world, but lean into this challenge. Even small efforts of controlling your attention will pay huge dividends in your life.

This will begin resonating in your life in new ways. Observe how it brings harmony into your life when you are fully present with all your actions.





The Most Important Part of Practice:

When you make a shift in your lifestyle make certain you observe the effects in your life. Watch yourself deeply, as the effects can be subtle. What emotions come up after you make changes in your diet? When you do your practice for a week straight, how do you feel at the end? What happens on the days you have great morning meditations?

These collected insights you hold inside yourself are the great gifts of yoga.



Remember,
life is a precious gift.
Cherish it with love,
laughter, and beautiful
friends.

