

## Gentle Yoga

Daily stresses can take their toll on your physical and emotional well being, and finding a way to release tension is essential to your good health. When work and family obligations leave you too tired to workout at the gym, gentle yoga can be a great alternative.

Developed in India more than 5000 years ago, yoga is a system of exercises and development of the mind, body and spirit. Gentle yoga consists of easy movements, long stretches, and deep breathing, perfect for relaxing before bed. The stretches are reminiscent of an animal preparing to bed down. This gentle form of Yoga is strenuous, so it won't over stimulate your body or keep you awake. Gentle yoga promotes the slowing down of your body and mind, and prepares both for a restful sleep.

Traditional yoga poses called Asana helps to strengthen the nervous system and relieve anxiety while promoting healthy rest. Asana poses have an affect on both physical and mental aspects of the body. Physically, Asana poses can strengthen, stretch, relax and even heal all parts of your body. This includes the digestion system, glands, muscles and cardiovascular health. Asana promotes mental health as well, cultivating a quiet and peaceful mind while increasing alertness and concentration. They can also help you spiritually by preparing your mind for meditation and letting you connect with God.

Some traditional yoga poses may be difficult for you to master. As a newcomer to yoga, you should choose poses that don't require you to twist your body into a position that doesn't feel comfortable. If you have the time and resources available, search for a yoga class or personal instructor to learn some of the Asana poses. If there are no classes or teachers in your area, refer to a good book or instructional video. Try gentle yoga poses that seem suitable to you, and remember, never strain, always relax.

If you suffer from chronic insomnia or occasional sleeplessness, gentle yoga can be an effective alternative to drugs. If you have trouble falling asleep, try meditating and doing some gentle stretches for about 30 minutes before going to bed. This will enable your mind to rest, and will alleviate all of the worries and anxieties that may be keeping you awake.

On the other hand, if you're able to fall asleep but tend to wake during the night, try deep breathing exercises. Listen to your breathing, and concentrate on the relaxing sounds and movements. Feel the rhythm of your chest moving up and down. Start at your head and concentrate as you relax each set of muscles. Don't go to the next set until you have managed to relax the muscles you're working on. Traditional yoga chants are another way to block everything else out of your mind. "Ohm" is the chant of choice for many yoga enthusiasts, but your personal chant can be any simple sound, word or phrase. Concentrate on your personal chant, and repeat it quietly until all other thoughts have been erased from your mind. The breathing exercises help clear your body of toxins, while relieving stress, depression, and other mental or physical problems.

A regular 30-minute practice session of gentle yoga each day will benefit your body, mind and spirit in many ways. After practicing for a time, you'll find that you've developed the habit and you'll possess a new peace of mind. You will also see an improvement in your body, and closer contact to your own spiritual side.

Gentle yoga does not involve a great deal of physical exertion. It is a restorative practice meant to calm, relax and revitalize. Try gentle yoga breathing, chants and stretches as alternatives to physically exhausting workouts or medicinal sleep aids. Your mind, body and spirit will thank you.