

Cure for Modern Day Stresses

Yoga is a 3,000-year-old, Hindu discipline of mind and body that became known in Western society with the hippie generation of the Sixties and early Seventies. Its image as a mystic practice is disappearing as fast as the stressful aspects of the Eighties are appearing.

As an effective method of stress management, yoga is spreading into the business world, the helping professions, nursing and old age homes, and is used in the treatment of alcoholics, hyperactive children and youngsters with learning disabilities. Yoga centers are getting stiff competition from adult education classes of community colleges, boards of education and parks and recreation departments.

The meaning of yoga is union of the body, mind and spirit with truth. There are many kinds of yoga to study, and there can be endless years of practice for the willing student.

Hatha Yoga is among the most popular forms in the west. It emphasizes the practice of postures, which stretch and strengthen the body, help develop a sense of balance and flexibility, as well as body awareness and mental concentration. All forms of yoga incorporate the practice of proper breathing techniques for relaxation, to rest the mind from its constant chatter, to experience an internal calm, and to energize and purify the body.

As stress levels in society reach new heights, Raja Yoga, the yoga of meditation, is growing in popularity in Western society, while others, such as Krya Yoga, the yoga of cleansing, and Mantra Yoga, the yoga of chanting, not surprisingly, have little appeal for newcomers.

Stretching and toning, though beneficial, aren't the primary reasons people turn to yoga. Newcomers are hoping that yoga will provide them with a means for handling stress and diffusing tension. The difference between exercise and yoga is that yoga has a meditative quality.

A lot of people are exercising for the psychological benefits and trying many of the Eastern activities, like yoga and tai chi. Yoga seems to have a calming effect on people.

And the techniques work on children as well as adults. When your children are quarreling, ask them to stop what they're doing, raise their arms over their heads, lean forward and breathe deeply to help diffuse their anger. It definitely helps them to cool it.

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