

Styles of Yoga

Thank you all for your wonderful research and presentations on different styles of yoga. Below is a summary of the styles that we discussed. I've also added in brief descriptions of Hatha Yoga and Yoga Nidra.

Hatha Yoga

Also considered one of the Paths of Yoga, the understanding of what Hatha Yoga is has changed over the years.

'Ha' can be translated as sun, and 'tha' as moon, and Hatha Yoga can be considered the practice to balance these energies. Yet Hatha can also be translated as 'force', so may be described as 'the yoga of force' and the branch of yoga that primarily works through the body by the practice of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha (energy locks). Traditional Hatha Yoga is intended to prepare and lead to Raja Yoga, the Royal Path (refer back to your handout on Paths of Yoga).

More recently, when referring to yoga classes, Hatha Yoga is used to describe classes with a slow and steady pace, with postures being held for a longer time to give one time to experience the effects. Hatha Yoga classes are often thought of as being a gentler practice, although this isn't always the case.

Jivamukti

Jivamukti was founded in America in 1984 by Sharon Gannon and David Life. Having studied in India under several gurus, they shared their teachings as Jivamukti Yoga – a style of yoga that has now spread throughout the world. The name comes from the Sanskrit word 'jivanmukta' which means 'liberated whilst living'.

A Jivamukti class will include strong flow-style asana, chanting, yoga philosophy teachings, music, breathing practices and meditation. Classes follow a set theme throughout each month, and Jivamukti teachers follow 'Five Tenets' as their fundamental philosophy:

Ahimsa:	Non-violence to all living beings and the environment.
Bhakti:	Devotional practice, for example through chanting
Dhyana:	Meditation
Nada:	The use of sound and silence
Shastra:	Study of ancient texts

<https://jivamuktiyoga.com>

Restorative Yoga

Restorative Yoga has been brought to the fore as a distinct yoga practice largely through the teachings of Judith Hanson Lasater, who studied under BKS Iyengar and found inspiration in his use of props to modify poses and to facilitate recovery from pain or injury.

Restorative Yoga encourages deep rest and relaxation, aided by the use of props so that the body is completely supported and can let go of all effort. Most of the postures are practiced lying down, and are held for a period of time to allow the body to fully release into the pose.

Restorative Yoga generally requires props such as a bolster, blocks, bricks, blankets and a strap – but you can improvise using items around the home such as pillows, firm cushions and chunky books.

Judith Hanson Lasater describes Restorative Yoga as a way to:

- relieve the effects of chronic stress
- encourage a healthy spine; restorative poses include backbends, forward bends, side bends and twists.
- reverse the effects of gravity through the inclusion of gentle and supported inversions (see the benefits of inversions in the handout from Day 8)
- stimulate and soothe the internal organs
- create balance, by balancing the energies of Apana (downward moving energy) and Prana (upward moving energy).

<https://www.judithhansonlasater.com>

Kundalini Yoga

Introduced to the West by Yogi Bhajan* in 1968, Kundalini Yoga is designed to awaken kundalini, dormant spiritual energy, for self-transformation through the practice of kriyas (asana, mudras, chants), challenging pranayama, and meditation. The practice is designed to clear negative energy patterns and connect to your higher consciousness.

There are several characteristics that differentiate Kundalini Yoga from other styles:

- Repetition in movements, breathing, and chanting for prolonged periods.
- Precise structure: the repetitive movements and accompanying breathing practices are precise in number, duration and position.
- Kriyas: the set sequence of movement, breath and mantra.

Those who practice Kundalini Yoga often wear white as this is believed to strengthen the aura, and wear a covering over their hair to ensure that the body is balanced energetically to allow the Kundalini energy to flow unimpeded.

(* After his death, Yogi Bhajan was implicated in abuse claims and those who practice Kundalini Yoga reject and distance themselves from him and any organisation that remain supportive of him).

Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga is said to be both ancient and new, with its roots embedded in ancient yoga history and practices, and its modern-day application inspired by a number of teachers around the 1990s. The most prominent Yin teachers are Paul Grilley, Sarah Powers and Bernie Clark and in the UK – Norman Blair.

Yin Yoga is a passive style of yoga, albeit one that is fairly challenging, that has the intention of yielding into the pose – allowing the body to gradually unfold, and targeting the deeper connective tissues by spending time in each posture (anything from 2 to 20 minutes). It also incorporates the principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine by stimulating the flow of chi in the meridians.

If you attend a Yin Yoga class you'll notice that many of the asana have been given different names than those you are usually familiar with, for example a posture similar to Paschimotthanasana, seated forward fold, is named Caterpillar in Yin Yoga.

There are 3 principles for the practice of Yin Yoga, according to Sarah Powers:

- Come into the pose to an appropriate depth
- Resolve to remain still
- Hold the pose for time

The complete 'Yinsights' book by Bernie Clark is available as a free e-book on his website: <https://yinyoga.com/yinsights/table-of-contents/>

Ashtanga Yoga

Ashtanga Yoga is a dynamic and vigorous style of yoga, in which a specific set of yoga asana are practised in defined sequences or series – each of which builds upon the previous.

Founded by Pattabhi Jois*, who received the vinyasa method from T. Krishnamacharya, the roots of Ashtanga lie in two ancient texts; the Yoga Korunta by Vamana and the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali (the word Ashtanga comes from Patanjali's Eight Limbs as defined in the Yoga Sutras). Popular modern-day figures in the Ashtanga style are David Svenson, Kino McGregor and Gregor Maehle.

The most noticeable aspect of Ashtanga Yoga is the practice of asana, but other key principles are the importance of the breath (the transitions between the postures linked by the use of ujjayi breath), the use of Drishti (gaze point) and bandhas (energy locks) – which are said to make the challenging aspects of the practice flow effortlessly. About these techniques, Gregor Maehle says that they “bind the postures together on a string so that they become a yoga mala or garland”. He goes on to say that the Ashtanga system is “designed to work as a movement meditation, where the transitions to the next are as important as the postures themselves”.

(*Pattabhi Jois has been implicated in the #MeToo movement, and some of his followers such as Gregor Maehle have since spoken out in support of the women who were affected).

Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is a form of guided meditation that encourages deep rest, and the experience of a state of consciousness that is between wakefulness and deep sleep. Yoga Nidra can be a deeply healing and transformative experience.

“The point about Yoga Nidra is that is an effortless state of being... although literally translated it means ‘yogic sleep’, in fact it is not a sleep but an awakening”.

Uma Dinsmore Tuli

There are several styles of Yoga Nidra, but generally the practice incorporates elements of the following:

- Setting a Sankalpa: A resolve or a statement of intent that lies at the heart of Yoga Nidra. It is a commitment to ourselves, and one which connects us to our true heart-

felt desire. The sankalpa is stated 3 times at the beginning of the practice, sowing the seed of intent, and then repeated again 3 times at the end of the practice – sealing the resolve and encouraging growth of the seed.

- Rotation of Awareness: a journey around the body, drawing the awareness away from external stimuli and the chatter of the mind, and relaxing the physical body.
- Pairs of Opposites: exploring different pairs of opposites, such as heaviness/lightness, heat/cold. This elements gradually invites us to become aware of sensations without judging them, and to gently let go.
- Visualisations: this could be a succession of rapid images, or a creative visualisation such as a journey through the chakras or a comforting nature scene such as a beach or meadow.

Teachers who both have different yet wonderful approaches to Yoga Nidra are [Tracee Stanley](#) (Radiant Rest) and [Uma Dinsmore Tuli and Nirlipta Tuli](#) (Total Yoga Nidra Network).

Dru Yoga

Dru Yoga was established in 1980, by 5 friends from Bangor University who had practiced yoga under two teachers Chagghanbai and Ecchaben Patel. The word 'Dru' comes from the Sanskrit "dhruva", meaning stillness.

With its roots in Hatha Yoga, a Dru class includes asana, pranayama, mudras, flowing and graceful 'Energy Block Release' sequences, relaxation and meditation. In Dru, all movements are encouraged to originate from the spine, joints are kept relaxed to encourage the flow of energy and there is a focus on balancing the energy of the chakras.

There are "Five Pillars of Dru" that form the foundation of the organisation:

- 1: Depth & Expertise: a holistic approach based on ancient and modern wisdom
- 2: Adaptability & Accessibility: yoga is for everyone, regardless of age, fitness or goals
- 3: Empowerment: to "become the best version of yourself"
- 4: Community: people and friendship are integral to Dru Yoga
- 5: Living is Giving: through volunteering and supporting the planet

<https://druyoga.com>

Iyengar Yoga

Founded by BKS Iyengar (1918 – 2014), student of Krishnamacharya, was hugely influential in yoga in India and the West, with Iyengar Yoga now popular throughout the world. His book "Light on Yoga" was published in 1966 and is often called 'the bible of yoga'.

The practice of Iyengar Yoga follows Patanjali's eight-fold path of yoga and is characterised by discipline, precise alignment and the use of props (including yoga blocks, straps and chairs). The teaching of asana in an Iyengar Yoga class is the same throughout the world, and prepares the student for progression to pranayama – usually after attending classes for two years.

Check out this video of BKS Iyengar giving a demonstration of yoga in 1976: [link](#).

Iyengar Yoga UK can be found [here](#).

BKS Iyengar wrote many books, and I highly recommend his book 'Light on Life' in which he discusses the five layers of being (pancha koshas) i.e. The physical Body, The Energy Body, The Mental Body, The Intellectual Body and The Divine Body.

Viniyoga

Viniyoga is a tradition of yoga, based on the teachings from Krishnamacharya and TVK Desikachar and founded on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

The key approach in Viniyoga is to adapt the various techniques of yoga to the individual; "giving each practitioner the tools to individualise and actualise the process of self-discovery and personal transformation" (Gary Krafstow).

Characteristics of this approach are:

- Yoga as a functional practice
- The importance of the breath
- The use of repetition of movements to explore the asana, and then a period of sustaining the posture
- Sequences are highly adaptable and are created to suit the needs of the individual

Two prominent organisations whose teachings are founded on viniyoga principles are Gary Krafstow's [American Viniyoga Institute](#), and in the UK [The Society of Yoga Practitioners](#) (accredited by the BWY).

Also see Phillipa's handout on Viniyoga from Day 8.