

Asana Awesomeness: Not Just For Ladies



Why Men Don't But Should Do Yoga
Via Cat Hamilton on April 18, 2016

When people think yoga, they often associate it with women. For some men, the thought of going to a yoga class is about as inviting as seeing the latest chick flick (if you like both of these things—more power to you!). But in the 10 years I've been teaching Pilates and practising Yoga, I've noticed an encouraging trend—more men are showing up.

Listen up, yoga-skeptical men: Yoga is a full-body workout, albeit in a different (and often necessary) kind of way. It isn't all about sitting, chanting, meditating, talking about feelings, or any other stereotypes. According to [scientific research](#), yoga can build strength, increase [flexibility](#), and improve balance, stability, sleep, and [relaxation](#).

If you still think that yoga is too girly, consider how many athletes are [jumping on the yoga bandwagon](#). Athletes around the country are turning to yoga for functional strength, injury prevention, and mental preparation to become better athletes. For regular weekend warriors, yoga can help with muscle soreness while improving focus and boosting overall energy level.

A recent [Yoga Journal survey](#) found that only about 18 percent of the 20.4 million people who practice yoga are men. Such was not always the case—if you go way back in the historical archives, evidence suggests that yoga [originated](#) in India about 5,000 years ago and was originally designed to be practiced by men. So why is yoga not as popular among the hairier, deeper-voiced set these days? The myths and stereotypes about yoga are one of the major turn-offs for many men. Men often claim that yoga is too touchy-feely, too feminine, or too New Age.

In addition to being too hippy-ish, some men don't consider the stretching, poses, and deep breathing exercises a “real” workout. What they don't realize, of course, is that yoga is exercise of a different stripe. Not every workout has to be a butt-kicking rush of adrenaline, like [boot camp](#) classes or [CrossFit](#). The focus and intention of yoga is different—it's all about the connection between mind and body. Yoga enthusiasts go to class to shift their energy and find inner peace. But that doesn't mean yoga can't make you break a sweat. Yogis build power and heat while “flowing” (aka moving through a series of poses), they discover strength in warrior and plank poses, and they challenge themselves with balancing, inversions, and other body-twisting advanced poses. And all that's done with mindfulness, a sense of stability, and a deeper connection with oneself.

Men commonly avoid yoga because they claim to lack flexibility. That's a lot like saying you don't want to lift weights because you don't have big muscles or you don't exercise because you're overweight. Even if the first few practices are a little challenging, lack of experience is no reason to avoid down dog-ing. Like any form of exercise, becoming a confident yogi takes time, effort, and plenty of practice.

It's a shame that yoga is often considered a girls-only club, since yoga is good for everyone. [Studies suggest](#) practicing yoga can lower heart rate and blood pressure, relieve anxiety, depression, and insomnia, as well as improve overall strength and flexibility. Other studies indicate a link between yoga and a reduction in [lower back pain](#).

There are also specific benefits just for men: Yoga can be an outlet to release mental and physical tension, especially for men who have a tendency to internalize stress and anxiety. It can also help stretch hip flexors and hamstrings, areas where men (or anyone unaccustomed to stretching) often have tightness. Yoga can be a wonderful complement to a fitness and mental health regimen—for everyone. So guys, don't get intimidated or put off by the Lulu-clad ladies filing into your yoga class. Anyone can practice yoga and reap the benefits, even from the first pose.

Cat is a certified Yoga, PiYo & Pilates teacher, freelance writer and a natural health, sustainable living and against animal cruelty advocate from the townships. She is an avid traveler who believes that we all have unique gifts to share with the world and it is through reconnecting with our authentic self that we can find our soul calling.

Connect with Cat on [Facebook](#) or find out more on how to register for a class on her [website](#).

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Community activity Exercising outdoors

- Exercising outdoors may improve energy levels and [decrease stress](#) to a greater extent than working out inside. With summer in full swing, it's the perfect time to mix up your routine by taking your [workout outside](#) to the Eddie-Custeau Kiosk at **Centennial Park in Lennoxville**:
- **June 28-Sept 1, 2016:**
- **Power Pilates** targets the deep muscles of the abdomen, hips and spine to strengthen your body from the inside out: Tues & Thurs 5 pm
- **PiYo*** combines the muscle-sculpting, core-firming benefits of Power Pilates with the strength and flexibility advantages of Power Yoga. And, I crank up the speed to deliver a true fat-burning, low-impact workout: Wed 12:10 pm-12:50 pm & 6:30 pm
- **this class is very physically demanding*
- **Restorative Yoga*** is something completely different. It's about slowing down and opening the body through passive stretching, and it can be very effective for preventing and rehabilitating injuries, improving posture, increasing flexibility, circulation, and balance: Tues 9 am & Thurs 6:30 pm
- **This class can be adapted and modified for people who have limited movement or who need to use a chair*
- **Power Yoga** strengthens your body, increases flexibility, stamina and weight loss as well as improving posture and balance. It regularly varies poses so that the practice never gets boring (see PiYo classes).
- **Poolates*** provides a safe environment gentle enough for post rehab training, osteoporosis or other risks of fracture, chronic injuries or illnesses, people who are overweight and pregnant women. Poolates strengthens while overcoming limited mobility, muscle fatigue, and joint stress.
- **this class will be held in the shallow end of the pool, space is limited and it is on a drop-in only basis due to weather permitting, class will only be canceled due to heavy rain and or threatening thunder and lightning: Tues 6:30 pm & Thurs 9 am*
- **For additional information:** call Cat @ (819) 200-1975 or email: pilatesaveccat@gmail.com or find out more on how to register for a class @ www.corebalancemobile.com