



Yoga for Every Body

By Ashley Flowers, Yoga Instructor

What comes to mind when you hear the word “yoga”? Do you think, “I wouldn’t touch it with a 10-foot pole,” “I’m a total devotee,” or “I’m somewhere in the middle?” Wherever you are on the subject, yoga, with its deep well of practices – from the physical to the mental, the tangible to the ephemeral – is worth a closer look.

It is easy to see yoga in the media and think it is all about standing on your head or being super flexible, but it’s really about getting to know yourself. Yoga helps you explore your ability to focus, connect, and be present. You could also choose a practice that concentrates on breath. If strength, balance, and flexibility are benefits you desire, they can be found through a physical practice. Whichever path you choose, yoga will help you get to know the beautiful and wonderful YOU at a deeper level.

So what do some of these various approaches look like?

Yoga nidra, sometimes referred to as yogic sleep, is practiced laying down and is a good starting place for those who want a non-physical option. Through guided meditation, you find a conscious state between waking and sleeping that allows the body to seek maximum relaxation as the mind journeys inward.

If you’re ready for a bit more physicality, restorative yoga provides lots of cushions, blocks, and blankets to customize and adjust comfort. This allows the body to soften in the exploration of each shape and creates mental space in which to notice the patterns of the mind.

Are you worried that if you get on the ground, you won’t easily get back up again? Chair yoga can meet a range of needs. You may want a session just for your upper body. Maybe you’re recovering from an illness or surgery. If you have limited use of your limbs or struggle with standing, using a chair allows you access to all of yoga’s benefits.

For those who quiet their minds by burning energy in intense, dynamic workouts, hot yoga and ashtanga yoga deliver.

Styles with a little bit of everything include vinyasa, hatha, iyengar, and sivananda yoga.

Many fit but “tight” yogis—those with shorter, less flexible muscles—love yin yoga. Its slow and meditative style challenges the mind with three-to-five-minute holds in each position that help

release tension in the body's connective tissue. Even the most flexible people can feel this tightness and benefit from yin.

Yoga embraces connection, so if you have questions about taking a first step, don't hesitate to visit a local studio or contact an instructor for guidance. A private class is often best for handling specific goals or persnickety pains. It can prepare you for public classes or develop a routine that you love and can practice at home. The right public class can create excitement and dedication to keep you going back week after week. If you're adventurous, you may enjoy a trial-and-error approach by visiting studios and sampling classes and styles until you find what works best. Wherever your yoga journey might take you, I wish you much joy in the adventure of getting to know yourself!

The author owns Ashley Flowers Yoga and offers private and public classes in Falmouth and other local communities. She is happy to answer yoga questions at relax@ashleyflowersyoga.com. [The Falmouth Community Wellness Resource Guide](#) includes a list of additional providers.