Chapter 14

YOGA

- One of the earliest forms of mind-body medicine and an integral part of Ayurvedic medicine
- Found described in sanskrit writings that date back to 1500 B.C.
- Further developed by the yogic sage Patanjali as passed along in his Yoga Sutras
YOGA

- In the East, it's practiced as a means of overall personal development
  - Ritual practice intended to lead one into a transcendent union with God
  - Unifying the atman with the paramatman
- In the West, it's used mainly to enhance health and alleviate various disease conditions

TYPES OF YOGA

- Hatha Yoga
  - Most prevalent practice in the West
  - Deals primarily with breathing exercises and physical postures to control physiological processes
  - Designed to make the mind and body fit instruments for perceiving greater spiritual awareness.
TYPES OF YOGA

- Karma Yoga
  - “yoga of action”
  - Incorporates a life in which individuals live their lives responsibly
  - Focus is on an opportunity to grow in every moment
  - Use talents in a selfless service to humanity

- Bhakti Yoga
  - “yoga of devotion” – self-surrender
  - Practitioners dedicate themselves to the worship of God in all their thoughts and actions
  - Sees the Divine in all things
  - Indian saint Ramakrishna was one of the most famous Bhakti yogis
TYPES OF YOGA

- Jnana Yoga
  - “yoga of knowledge”
  - Involves cultivating one’s awareness in order to distinguish what is real and what is illusionary
  - Focus on a process of self-observation and meditation

- Kundalini Yoga
  - Based upon a life force energy known as a coiled serpent situated in the umbilical region
  - Through practice, this energy is released through the seven chakras until it is able to flow freely along the spine to the crown chakra
  - Results in an altered consciousness
TYPES OF YOGA

- **Mantra Yoga**
  - Mantras (sounds) carry different frequencies that can lead to heightened awareness and concentration
  - Involves chanting these mantras as daily spiritual practice
  - Western research has shown this practice to trigger the relaxation response
    - Transcendental Meditation

- **Tantra Yoga**
  - Emphasizes acceptance of one’s nature including one’s sexuality
  - “expanding” or “weaving” all aspects of themselves to unite the spirit with the flesh in order to deeply perceive the divine joy in each moment
  - A complete way of life in the East; Often used in the West to improve sexual potency without regard of it’s true nature
TYPES OF YOGA

Raja Yoga
+ “the royal path”
+ Encompasses elements of most forms of yoga and therefore be adapted to fit different practitioners needs
+ Aim is complete transcendence of the sensory self in order to achieve total union with samadhi
+ Learns how to control thoughts, emotions, and desires while freeing oneself from conditioned responses and limited, egoist beliefs

Sites

http://yoga.org.nz/index.htm

http://www.yogapoint.com/index.htm
HOW IT WORKS

Raja Yoga

- Complete system of health with an approach for living an optimal lifestyle for personal development
- First four areas (or “limbs”) include yama, niyama, asana, and pranayama
- The last four limbs, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi are concerned with transcendent union with the Divine

HOW IT WORKS

Raja Yoga

- **Yama** includes truthfulness, continence, nonposessiveness, nonstealing and nonviolence
- **Niyama** involves cleanliness, contemplation, tapas, contentment, and surrender to a higher nature
- Together they comprise a way of life that is moral and ethical, and refinement of personal habits and traits
Raja Yoga

- **Asana** refers various postures and exercises that improve well-being
  - Meditative asanas
  - Therapeutic asanas

Practiced with asana, **pranayama** involves breathing exercises to control the flow of prana.

- Pranayama keeps these pathways unblocked and strengthens the nervous system.
- The combination of the two reduce stress and keep physiologic systems healthy.
HOW IT WORKS

• Raja Yoga
  + Pratyahara develops control and withdrawal of the senses from the physical world to achieve inner clarity
  + Regular practice prepares for dharana, systematic cultivation of the mind’s power of concentration
  + Together they achieve dhyana, a prolonged meditative state of superconsciousness which leads to the transcendent state of samadhi

HOW IT WORKS

• Raja Yoga
  + all limbs can be performed separately and result in a greater understanding of body, mind, spirit
  + Best results are obtained when practiced together
  + Asana, Pranayama, and meditation are combined readily by holistic practitioners
    - When a yoga posture is properly executed, it stimulates the unobstructed flow of pranic energy through the body
    - Pranayama makes them more aware of this flow which develops an appreciation for the mind-body connection
CONDITIONS THAT BENEFIT FROM YOGA

- Wide range of physiological and psychological benefits

- Asthma
  - Regular practice improves respiration rates and increases lung capacity
  - Reduces tension in and creates more control of respiratory passageways

- Addiction
  - Reduces anxiety, increases self-esteem, and improves mental functioning
  - Reduces effects of withdrawal
CONDITIONS THAT BENEFIT FROM YOGA

- **Back Pain**
  - Alleviates muscle tension, restores spinal alignment, and increases flexibility
  - Improves focus of posture and reduces stress

- **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome**
  - Increased lower arm strength and ROM in the wrist
  - Reduces episodes of pain and pain perception

CONDITIONS THAT BENEFIT FROM YOGA

- **Cognitive Skills**
  - Alternate nostril breathing, a form of Pranayama, has shown to increase brain activity in the hemisphere opposite the active nostril
  - Increased brain activity increases potential for learning

- **Epileptic Seizures**
  - Sahaja yoga has been shown to reduce seizures by increasing awareness of the body’s energy systems
Try it, take it seriously, and go at your own pace

Yoga is one of the fastest growing practices for holistic health care and for conventional care

It's safe, effective, and proven to be a beneficial practice for overall health

Namasté