

Yoga, bringing your Practice Home...



As our lifestyles are getting more and more hectic, many of us are looking for a release. Whether you're looking to shape up, build strength, increase your flexibility or relax your mind, yoga has the answers. However the peace and strength we feel after our weekly yoga class may not be enough to get us through our busy weeks. In order to tap into this feeling on a daily basis, creating your own yoga space in your home may just be the answer.

Yoga originated in India 5000 years ago and offers a holistic approach to mind, body and spirit, by creating an inner peace.

Today, it's a tool for people of all ages, shapes and sizes to relax minds and tone bodies. While there are many different variations of yoga, a session will usually involve a combination of posture work, stretches, gentle movement and meditative and breathing exercises.

Establishing a home practice, how to get started?

One of the great things about yoga is that you can do it almost anywhere. Beginners wondering how to get started should first attend as many classes as possible so they can benefit from the expert advice of a teacher and become familiar with the basics of yoga.

When you are ready to start doing yoga at home, follow these tips:

1. *Equipment*

You need very little to begin your yoga home practice. At the very least, you'll need a yoga mat. Optional extras would be to include a belt or strap for hard to reach stretches and an eye pillow and blanket for relaxation.

2. *Create your own serene yoga space*

As long as your body can move 360 degrees in all directions, you have enough space to do yoga. That said, the more space you have, the better.

If you can't dedicate a whole room to your yoga space, just use the corner of your bedroom or sitting room. Just make sure you have enough room to move. Try to find a space that you can keep completely free of any clutter and that there are enough moments in the day when that area is quiet. Having a dedicated yoga space is really helpful when you are trying to start a yoga home practice.

You should also make sure your yoga space keeps you warm during your sessions.

Kate Gaffey a teacher at Tara Wellbeing Studio and gives the following tips on decorating your yoga space:

'Scented candles or incense help enhance the atmosphere and depending on your beliefs or spirituality, a Buddha or picture of a deity/yoga guru can also be inspiring for your practice. If you're limited with space you can easily transform a room in your home at any time by setting the scene with any of the above.'

3. *Pick a day and time to practice*

Just as you have a class scheduled at your yoga studio that you can't miss, set up a class schedule at home. Start off with once a week, so it doesn't feel forced, and gradually add a day or more when you're ready.

Don't expect to do a full 60 minutes. Start off with something reasonable, like 20 minutes, and as you get used to doing yoga at home, your body will crave a longer practice.

4. *Pick up some relaxing music*

You may choose to practice in silence, however music can help focus the mind and block out any external distractions. From soothing chimes and rhythmic beats, to loud chanting, there's so much to choose from and it can help increase your energy, which will inspire you to practice longer.

5. *Pop in a yoga DVD*

Unless you're a yoga instructor or practicing a set series of postures like in Ashtanga, it can be tough coming up with a sequence to fill your practice. So take the guesswork out of your home practice and follow along with a Yoga DVD.

6. *Print out a sequence*

If you do not like to practice with a DVD, look at some yoga books and write out a sequence, or print out a sequence from an online source.

7. Audio Recordings

Download podcasts, or listen to your favourite teacher's audio recordings.

When you are new to practicing at home, following DVDs, audio recordings or printed sequences are a great way to jumpstart your home practice. There are lots of online sources to help students begin their home practice, one of the best being www.yogajournal.com.

Of course, continuing to attend classes is a great way to get ideas on fun new ways to sequence poses. This will help keep your home practice fresh. Attending classes also helps you work on your technique and is an opportunity to bring any questions or queries to your teacher.

Finally, some more words of advice from Kate: *'Above all of this is the commitment, discipline or desire to get on the yoga mat and actually practice, even if it is a few minutes of deep conscious breathing - the rewards are huge.'*

If you have any queries about anything in this article, your yoga home practice or are interested in attending yoga or Pilates courses, classes in Tara Wellbeing Studio begin Monday 15th of June; please contact Rachel on Rachel@mywellbeing.ie or check out www.mywellbeing.ie.