<http://www.expressionsofspirit.com/yoga/basic-principles.htm>

***Yoga***

***Basic Principals* *and Benefits of Practice***

     Yoga is an ancient art that comes from India; the name translates as *creating union.*This concept of creating union is expressed in the philosophical perspective that our lives are an energetic combination of body, mind and spirit. The physical action of the yoga poses serve to challenge the practitioner to create balance, strength and flexibility in all aspects of their being. These characteristics are then carried over into our day-to-day lives with the intent of being able to deal calmly with the challenges we face there.

     One of the most sacred Indian text states that there are four major reasons that people sought out yoga. From lowest to highest they were categorized as: the desire to reduce pain, the desire to feel better, the desire to gain power (internal and external) over our lives, and finally, the desire to achieve spiritual discrimination. Contemporary westerner interests in yoga can be seen to fit into these traditional categories but we usually tend to look at the benefits with an eye to more basic results: We may want to get rid of a nagging back ache, to slow down and de-stress, to ease some emotional heartache, or to find a physical activity that can give us strength and flexibility.

     Because yoga focuses on finding your internal center through focused breathing and concentration, the benefits are many and widespread. It is common to find that a yoga practice creates more equanimity and internal silence, making dealing with the stresses of our lives more manageable. The effectiveness of yoga lies in its simplicity of process, its ability to evoke a sense of wholeness, balance and calm. One works on tuning-in to their body in that present moment and then begin to open and strengthen through breathe and movement.

     This emphasis on starting-where-you-are makes it easy for beginners to start a yoga practice, regardless of their current physical shape. By paying attention to *where you are now*and then striving to make that condition better, we become focused on creating positive changes that *unite* us with our highest aspirations. This is the intention of yoga, to empower the individual by creating focus and a conscious path of connectivity between breath, physical body, emotions, and ultimately our mastery over our reactions to the pressures and conflicts of life in the material world.