

PRACTICAL EXERCISES • NUTRITION • MINDFULNESS • LIFESTYLE & WELLNESS

YOGA

MAGAZINE™

www.yogamagazine.com

ISSUE 261 / JANUARY 2025

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025



Cybernetic Meditation

Awareness &
Precautions

ashtanga

HEAL WITH

SHIATSU

YOUR NEXT ESCAPE AWAITS

Discover the Best Yoga
Retreats of 2025



UK £6.00

USA \$11.25 CANADA \$14.99
BELGIUM, FRANCE, CYPRUS, ITALY, AUSTRIA, MALTA, SPAIN,
LUXEMBOURG, NETHERLANDS,
PORTUGAL €11.00 JAPAN ¥1572.00 UAE AED58

CONTENTS

ON THE COVER



28

08

74

34



BWY SPECIAL

48 BEATING THE JANUARY BLUES

Yoga therapy combats January blues by fostering relaxation, vitality, and connection, addressing physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

YOGA STUDIO SPECIAL

08 THE HEALING ART OF SHIATSU

Shiatsu is a Japanese healing art using touch, pressure, and stretches to balance energy flow, promoting relaxation and self-healing.

FEATURES

70 AYURVEDA ~ ANCIENT WISDOM FOR MODERN MENTAL HEALTH

A 7,000-year-old holistic science, offers personalised remedies, lifestyle practices, and spiritual insights to enhance mental health and resilience.

64 YOUR CUPPA CHAI?

Yogini Ju reflects on preserving authentic Vedic yoga, respecting its spiritual roots, and teaching it responsibly for holistic healing.

74 PRACTISING ASHTANGA YOGA: PRECAUTIONS AND AWARENESS

Ashtanga Yoga combines physical and mental practices, emphasizing precautions, awareness, and gradual progression to achieve physical and spiritual balance.

20 NIDRA SHAKTI: THE POWER OF REST

"Nidra Shakti" explores Yoga Nidra's power, blending history, traditions, and 108 practical transcripts, celebrating the Goddess of Rest. Answers to our mental health.

PHILOSOPHY

38 'DO NOT BE ATTACHED TO ANYTHING!' - LESSONS FROM THE 'GREAT' TEACHER ATISHA

Atisha, a renowned buddhist teacher, advocated non-attachment, mindfulness, and practical spirituality for enlightenment and virtuous living.

24 MASTER YOUR BREATH & FIND YOUR TRUE PURPOSE!

Breathwork helps unlock your true potential by connecting you with your subconscious, releasing blocks, and aligning with your purpose.

28 CYBERNETIC MEDITATION

Cybernetic meditation blends fitness training with mindfulness, enhancing body-mind connections, physical performance, and states of "High Well-Being."

79 THE TRUTH OF QUANTUM ABUNDANCE

Reprogramming self-limiting beliefs and aligning thoughts, emotions, and actions with limitless potential for transformation.





52 MIND THE GAP!
"MIND THE GAP!" highlights Yoga's power in reducing stress and anxiety, combining ancient practices with modern scientific insights for mental health.

READERS' ASHRAM

22 ASK YOGI MAHARAJ DR MALIK

98 VEDIC ASTROLOGY

CREATIVE ART

18 ILLUSTRATION OF THE MONTH

NEWS

19 NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS
Explore the most trending New Year's resolutions for 2025, from eating healthier and saving money to working out and reading more

82 HEALTH & WELLNESS WRAPPED
2024 health trends mix quick fixes like Oatzempic with sustainable practices; 2025 forecasts stress management and balanced wellness choices

YOGA POSES

14 5 WAYS TO FIX YOUR PAIN IN THE BUTT
Discover effective stretches, exercises, and tips to alleviate common causes of hip, glute, and sciatic pain with expert guidance.

WELLNESS DESTINATION

86 THE RETREAT THAT NEVER ENDS
The amazing natural world gives us incredible healing plants which could be seen as manifestations of the conscious intelligence of the universe.

58 A WELLNESS RETREAT IN MAURITIUS
Experience holistic wellness at Mauritius' Beachcomber Resorts: yoga, spa treatments, sustainability, and luxury amidst breathtaking natural beauty."

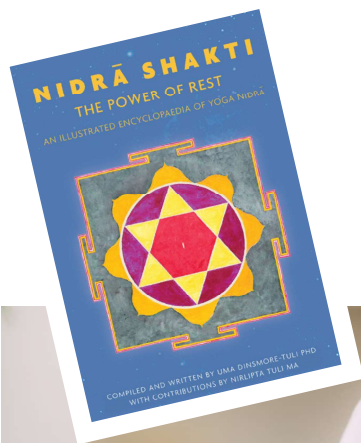
34 5 BEST WELLNESS BREAKS FOR 2025
Discover 2025's top wellness retreats, from luxury escapes to family-friendly resorts and transformative yoga experiences.

SERIES

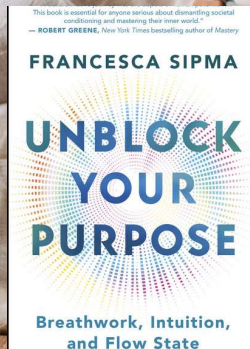
42 THE KUNDALINI
A yogi explores mystical experiences, learns meditation, and uncovers divine tales of devotion, reflecting on spiritual growth and ancient wisdom.

WHAT'S HOT

92 NEW BOOKS, ACCESSORIES AND PRODUCTS



08





BWY



AT
THE
HEART
OF YOGA

Join us. Train with us.
Develop with us.

bwy.org.uk



Beating the January Blues The Uplifting Power of Yoga

Want to learn more?

If you want to specialise in Yoga Therapy, Barbara is teaching a Yoga Therapy module for BWY in September. Find out more here:
<https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/417>

Words: Barbara Dancer, BWY Yoga Therapy Course Module Tutor

As the festive glow fades and January's crisp, grey skies settle in, it's natural to experience tiredness and a low mood. The warmth of celebration gives way to the rhythm of routine, and the fresh optimism of a New Year can feel elusive. It's natural to feel a little off-balance during this transitional time – tired, uncertain, or lacking your usual spark. So, how can yoga practices and yoga therapy help us navigate this challenging time of year?

Yoga therapy applies appropriate yoga not only to specific health issues but to the unique individual and their circumstances. It's a self-caring and empowering approach to regaining health and can address physical, psychological and emotional imbalances. Sessions are usually one-to-one with a short and manageable practice created for that person to use in their own time. This promotes steady, sustainable change,

affecting or adjusting the patterns of the body, breathing, the mind and thoughts.

Yoga therapists consider the whole person and draw on yogic and ayurvedic models to identify where symptoms and aggravating factors lie and what kind of yoga will be most suitable to restore health. The *Pancha Maya* model describes the human body as five inter-related layers that make up the whole person, helping us better understand who we are. It goes beyond physical health, also considering the energetic body, the mind, our deeper wisdom that shapes personality and our spiritual essence. A yoga therapy practice is then designed to reduce symptoms, address aggravating factors in these five layers and develop better patterns to improve overall health.

The first stage is to look at what is happening and the effects that we can identify.

Acknowledge the feeling but don't camp there

Our interoceptive awareness allows us to tune into our feelings. It's important to acknowledge feelings – whatever they are. Feeling blue could be more specifically sadness, emptiness or tiredness. While it is not easy to face uncomfortable feelings, recognising them is an important first step. Notice feelings in the physical body, whether heaviness, stiffness, tension or tiredness. Notice breathing, the sensitive barometer of our inner state, and whether it feels restricted, irregular or higher in the chest rather than deep in the abdomen. Notice too whatever emotional state is present. This somatic and emotional information helps us understand how we are feeling and guides us in choosing what we need through times of low mood.

Rest and relax to recover but don't camp there

When we feel tired, practices focused on relaxation, particularly yoga nidra or 'yogic sleep', can be beneficial. The parasympathetic nervous system which promotes our rest and digest state mainly through the vagus nerve, needs time to engage across the many different parts including muscles, breathing, digestion, heart rate and blood pressure. Relaxing takes time and different people need different practices. Ask your yoga teacher if they offer longer periods of relaxation in class or look locally for yoga nidra or relaxation classes. After the busy festive season, we can feel drained and finding time to relax can help restore energy and good mood. Rest is particularly important for those dealing with illness, whether short or longer-term. Alice (not her real name), a woman with multiple sclerosis, joined a chair-based class I teach. When she first arrived, she was reserved, withdrawn and her mood seemed down and flat. Depression can accompany chronic health conditions and even if not clinically diagnosed, it is common and is an important

consideration for overall health. The class focused on gentle steady movement combined with breathing. Pauses between sections of movement encouraged rest and recovery. Relaxation practices were a hugely popular part of the class, emphasising both the time and the importance of fully relaxing. Yoga helped Alice relax both physically and mentally, while the group provided a supportive space that allowed her to build confidence. Over time, she became more engaged, talkative, and vibrant, eventually becoming much happier thanks to the combination of yoga and the group's encouragement.

Be in good company to lift your mood

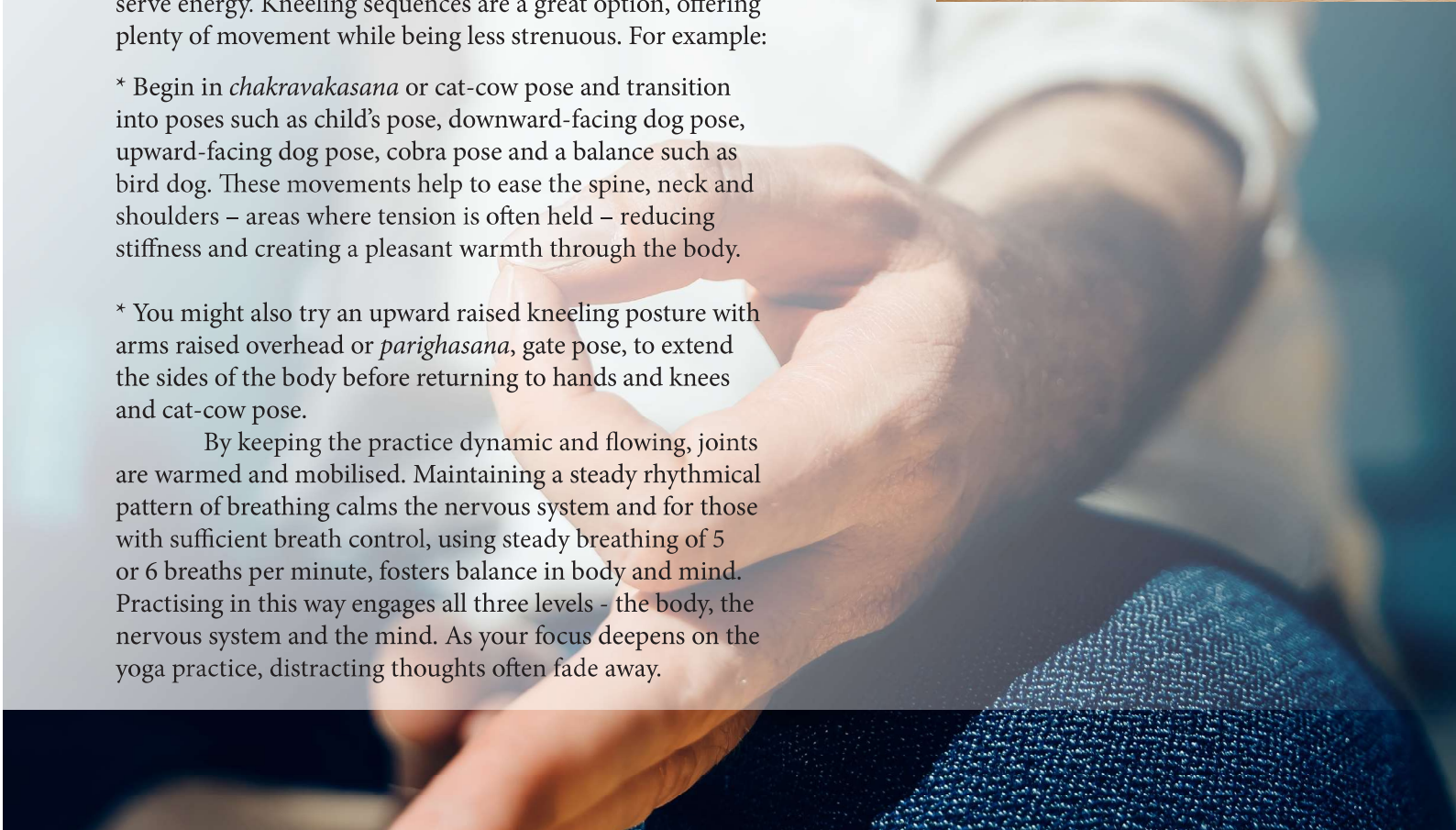
When we feel down and our mood is low, our instinct is often to withdraw from others and we don't feel like being sociable. But we underestimate how interaction with others, especially people that we can relate to, whether good friends or people we don't know, can lift our mood. This is the value of attending a yoga class where people come together to practice, relax, smile and talk. It naturally lifts our mood and we feel more present in the world and less caught up in our thoughts. Across the country, skilled British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) teachers offer a wide variety of classes, so you're sure to find one that suits you. Sharing yoga in the presence of others, exchanging smiles and feeling the group's energy, creates a sense of community and connection which is uplifting and reassuring.

Slow flow

If we feel heavy or stiff due to a low mood, yoga therapy can bring relief with gentle, slow-flowing movements that conserve energy. Kneeling sequences are a great option, offering plenty of movement while being less strenuous. For example:

- * Begin in *chakravakasana* or cat-cow pose and transition into poses such as child's pose, downward-facing dog pose, upward-facing dog pose, cobra pose and a balance such as bird dog. These movements help to ease the spine, neck and shoulders – areas where tension is often held – reducing stiffness and creating a pleasant warmth through the body.
- * You might also try an upward raised kneeling posture with arms raised overhead or *parighasana*, gate pose, to extend the sides of the body before returning to hands and knees and cat-cow pose.

By keeping the practice dynamic and flowing, joints are warmed and mobilised. Maintaining a steady rhythmical pattern of breathing calms the nervous system and for those with sufficient breath control, using steady breathing of 5 or 6 breaths per minute, fosters balance in body and mind. Practising in this way engages all three levels - the body, the nervous system and the mind. As your focus deepens on the yoga practice, distracting thoughts often fade away.



Breath, mind and prana

After a flowing yoga practise, it is nice to transition to pranayama (conscious breathing) to deepen your sense of calm or use it as a standalone practise. If your breathing feels restricted, shallow, fast or confined in the chest, pranayama is a key practice for you.

Nadi shodhana, known as alternate nostril breathing, promotes a balanced state of mind between alertness and relaxation and between left and right brain activities; the rational and the creative. With regular use, it also reduces congestion in the nostrils. Use the same pattern of breathing as the slow flow sequence, of 5-6 breaths per minute, settling easily into a calm and balanced state. Even dedicating just 5-10 minutes to pranayama during a busy day can be both time efficient and highly effective. Don't overlook the immediate benefits of pranayama as it often achieves mental calmness in less time than asana or physical practice.

Pranayama is traditionally recognised to cultivate mental steadiness and enhance *prana*, the vital energy of life within us. Clearing away what is not useful or needed in the body-mind makes space for prana within. The *shodhana* (meaning clearing or purifying) part of this practice is a way of clearing and optimising the energetic space for prana, promoting a return to balanced health and wellbeing.

Yoga is empowering self-care for our whole being

What if low mood isn't reflective of tiredness or a need to slow down? Yoga therapy encourages us to consider the underlying causes. This isn't always easy but we can consider what is happening in our life; perhaps a dread of returning to a job where we are unhappy, recognising the challenges of a difficult relationship made more noticeable over Christmas, or a change that we know we want to make but feel scared doing. The process of change does not have to be undertaken alone. Seek support from others – whether from good friends or professional guidance to help with challenges that feel too daunting.

Yoga provides support during hard times. The January blues remind us to prioritise self-care. We may need the quiet peace that comes from drawing our attention inward through yoga practice, balanced with the warmth of connection and caring for our body and mind in ways that feel right for us. Carving out even a few hours for self-care helps. Tailor your yoga practice to meet your needs: yoga nidra for rest, slow flow yoga for heaviness or stiffness or pranayama for shallow breathing. Each restores us to a more relaxed space where body, mind and spirit feel better integrated, fostering a compassionate connection with ourselves. Taking time to feel the wholeness of ourselves across the layers of our physical, mental and spiritual selves (*Pancha Maya* model), reminds us that being whole doesn't mean being perfect. Even if we feel the weight of larger problems, then resting, nurturing and re-integrating ourselves can only do us good. It promotes better mental health, boosts immunity, lifts mood and supports a better metabolism, empowering us to move through the darker months with renewed optimism.



Barbara Dancer is co-founder of Yoga Therapy Whole Person Healing, an organisation offering yoga therapy and training in yoga therapy. She is also a Yoga Therapy course module tutor for BWY. She has taught yoga therapy privately since 2007, in the charity sector, in complementary health settings and through publicly funded projects. She also serves as a committee member of the British Council for Yoga Therapy. You can find out more about Barbara's work at www.yogatherapywholeperson-healing.co.

