

Which Type Of Yoga Is Best For You?

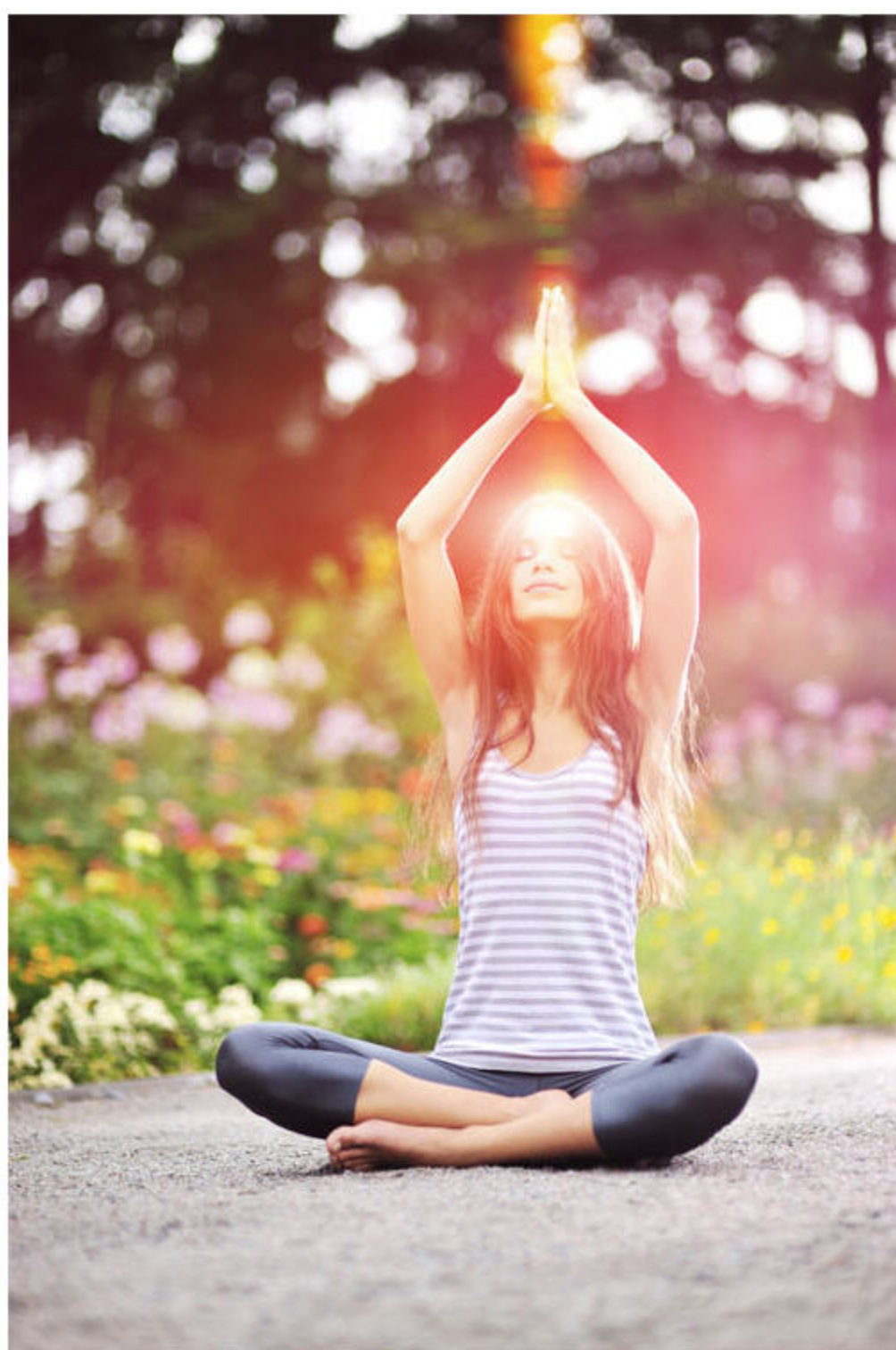
by Shannon Farrell

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We see them everywhere — those women who walk down the street in Lululemon pants with a yoga mat in one hand and a green smoothie in the other. Aside from looking fit, they look well rested, alert and downright happy. Curious about the hype, we decided to delve into the practice by test-driving some classes at [Pure Yoga](#) in Manhattan and getting the lowdown from some of their top instructors. Here's how yoga can give both your body and mind a boost.

What are the benefits of yoga?

"Yoga relaxes the mind and lowers the affects of stress while toning the body [building long, lean muscles]," says **Dana Slamp**, a Senior Yoga Instructor at Pure Yoga. "It can improve balance, mental focus, and a positive body image and sense of self."

Yoga works the body *and* brain. The point is not to zone out, like many exercisers do when slogging cardio miles or completing endless reps. "You're asked to zone in, to be present, to stay vigilant with training your mind to be focused," says **Terrence Monte**, Managing Teacher at Pure Yoga. That kind of concentration forces you to block out all of the "noise," i.e., the upcoming deadlines at work or the argument you had with your significant other.

The best part? Anyone can do yoga. "I've seen every body type with every known injury condition," says Monte. "I've seen people that have never worked out in their lives, and people that work out twice a day. I've seen people do yoga from a hospital bed. I've seen people do yoga from their TV screens. It can be done by anyone, anywhere." Anyone can practice yoga — the key is finding the practice that works best for your needs.

Which type of yoga is right for you?

Flowing Classes

Vinyasa yoga is a term that covers a broad range of classes that are characterized by flowing poses and sequences that are linked to the breath. This type of yoga can be considered one of the more traditional forms. Also referred to as flow yoga, the practice has qualities in common with dance because of the smooth transition from one pose to the other. **Slow Flow Yoga** is a deep approach to vinyasa yoga. This practice links poses to breath to reveal body awareness, inner strength, and easeful opening.

"**Prema Vinyasa** classes include the philosophy and meditative aspects of the practice without skimping on the workout," says Slamp. A more vigorous form of vinyasa, it includes specific alignment for advanced postures while exploring the body, mind and soul of the person through live music, philosophy and meditation. Prema is a smart option for a more experienced yogi who wants a more active practice without losing the mindful approach.

Cardio Focused

If you're used to cardio classes or hitting up the treadmill, you may be more interested in classes that really work up a sweat, like **Hot Power Yoga** and Pure Yoga's newest class **Figure 4**. Hot yoga, taught in a 95-105 degree studio, has become very appealing recently. Monte gave us the top reasons why: "The heat makes your muscles more malleable so you can feel a deeper stretch and therefore release. Hot classes in general tend to have loud pumping music which attracts the people that want a cardio class." Think more movement, less meditation. One thing to be mindful of, Monte warns, is that "the heat can anesthetize you to pain, so you need to be more mindful about what you're doing with your body (again: you can't zone out and do yoga)." Not like your typical yoga classes, **Figure 4** is fast-paced, working the abs, arms, butt and thighs. "The class also provides interval cardio which helps boost metabolism and keep the heart rate in a fat burning zone," says **Kate Albarelli**, Founder of Figure 4 at Pure Yoga. "The body will respond with longer, leaner, more chiseled muscles and the mind will love the endorphin release!" Think of this as a hybrid between yoga and Pilates.

Meditative Practices

Classes that focus mostly on the mind — **Yoga Nidra** and **Restorative** — should be taken at least once a week to balance harder, physical classes. "These classes access the parasympathetic nervous system — the 'rest and digest' response," says Slamp. "Simply put, if a device never shuts down, it runs a high risk of breaking down. And since the parasympathetic nervous system works as a dimmer switch, the added bonus is that your ability to sleep or otherwise calm your mind can greatly improve." Let's call this the insomniac's natural sleeping pill.