

I want to be healthy on all levels – how can Yoga help?

According to The Philosophical Basis of Yoga Therapy by Dr. Timothy McCall (Yoga Journal online) "texts such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita inform the modern practice of therapeutic yoga... a path to liberation, an end to suffering." According to Dr. Swami Shankardev Saraswati, "Yoga trains our body, mind and spirit, transforming our nervous system and mind so that we can attain, maintain, and sustain higher awareness."

Patanjali taught about the eight-limbed path. The first limb includes "yamas" – rules about morality and ethics such as being gentle, non-greedy, honest. The second limb contains "niyamas" these are about HOW we create health – through discipline (inner fire/enthusiasm), self-study (how attitudes and choices influence behaviors and state of health), and as the Bhagavad Gita encourages, do your best and disengage from results.

Another teaching of Patanjali regards suffering. In yoga-speak this is called the "Monkey Mind". Sages compared this anguish-filled restlessness to that of a drunken monkey. Yoga "stills the fluctuations of the mind". The remaining limbs, include doing postures (asanas), and breath work/meditation and visualization – how to calm the Monkey mind.

Ultimately, yoga can help us to feel connected to the sacred, within and without. Intuition is developed, and an ability to listen to the small voice within, to connect with higher wisdom, unconditional love, and the divine. According to Dr. McCall, the questions (dharma) "Why are you here? What have you got to contribute to the world?", help us to not only be healthy but also to live peacefully and authentically.

Printed in the SCAD Chronicle 2006, under the heading, HEALTH GURU written by Wellness Specialist and Counselor, Ellen Farrell MA, NCC, LPC who coordinated wellness and lifestyle management services in the department of student recreation and fitness.