

5 Ways Yoga Can Help You Heal

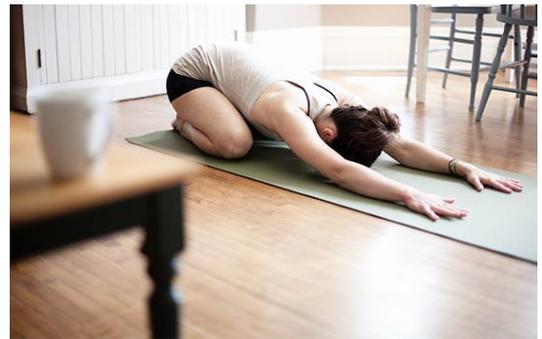
By [JENNIFER PASTILOFF](#)

Yoga has been around for over 5,000 years, and during this time people have been aware that Yoga and meditation have the ability to help soothe the soul. If done properly, yoga can help achieve goals and bring intense focus to things you want to change. That's just what happened to me.

I used to hate myself.

I was 17 when I discovered the addictive drug of anorexia. My self-hatred grew and flourished like a proud peacock. It was my badge of honor.

I literally couldn't be with people. Someone would be talking to me, and all I would be thinking about is: *"What did I eat today? Why did I eat that? Why am I so fat? How will I burn it off? Maybe if I exercise for 4 hours I will be OK. I am a monster. I will not eat at all the rest of the week to make up for what I ate today."*



No matter what the person in front of me was saying, no matter what their lips were doing, I was in my own head, fighting with myself.

And I was losing.

Then, yoga found me.

Here's How Yoga Can Help You Heal:

1. You'll Quiet Your Mind

I would find that I would have one hour or 90 minutes where I was completely lost in my head. I was in a space in between my thoughts — the space in between my mind chatter. Being an exercise bulimic (over-exercising) I was used to being at the gym where all I would do was stare at myself in the mirror as I was on the treadmill and criticize myself. In yoga class I started to find the piece of me that I lost when I became so sick. I started to return to who I really was without thinking: "I am so fat" or "I am a monster."

I wasn't completely cured overnight. There were still occasions in yoga classes where I would still feel what I perceived as my "fat rolls" while in a twisting pose, and I'd have a panic attack. Or, I would all of a sudden remember what I ate and start hyperventilating.

But, the spaces in between this happening got longer. Until that was all there was. Until I was living in the space in between.

2. You'll Benefit From the Power of Acceptance

It wasn't until I started teaching yoga that I truly healed.

All of a sudden I felt accountable. I realized I was talking about acceptance and love and if I had any integrity I would have to truly have acceptance and love for myself.

I also realized that people were coming to me for support even before they knew how much I had suffered, because, to put it simply, I made them feel safe. How could I go back to starving myself or hating myself when people are looking toward me for hope? I couldn't. It was non-negotiable.

3. You'll Feel Joy

I jokingly call myself a certified joy-ologist. Obviously, I wasn't always. *"I am making up for lost time,"* I tell people. I never thought I deserved joy before.

One of the main focuses of my classes (and my own yoga practice) is joy. Yoga has again given me that space to play and be free and be silly. I invented something called [Karaoke Yoga®](#), and people love it. I truly believe it is because a lot of us have denied ourselves joy for far too long.

You must have at least one dance party a day in my book. Especially, if like me, you spent many years having no dance parties.

4. You'll Practice Mantras and Affirmations

I started to include mantras in my yoga classes, and I lovingly dubbed them "mind tattoos." For example, my mantra this week was "I am peace." In my classes every time the hands come to prayer position at the heart center we have a silent mantra. My hope is that we re-wire our brain and our thoughts.

The hands come to the heart center so many times in my class that there is no way you aren't rewiring your thoughts if you are committing to the mantra. Yoga has given me the space to do this.

5. You'll Learn to Let Go

One of the biggest ways yoga helped me heal from anorexia was the release it provided me. I had stored so much in my body — so much pain and sadness — that often when I practiced yoga I would sob. I wouldn't know where the tears were coming from. This used to scare me, but eventually I realized I was softening my grip. I was letting go of who I was in order to become who I am.

Yoga did all that.

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/blog/5-ways-yoga-can-help-you-heal/#ixzz4liwkPzIm>