

Practicing yoga in Sisters: Is it right for me?

By **Akiko Oncken**
Correspondent

It is not uncommon these days to turn a page on a magazine or see in social media a photo of a woman posing in a yoga posture. The presence of yoga in the fitness industry, and the familiarity that a regular person may have with yoga, gives practitioners and teachers like me encouragement as it allows us to reach out to many for whom this practice could be transformative. However, current forms of advertising often risk distorting and limiting what a person's perspective might be about yoga to the point of making it seem rather intimidating. Yet, there are a range of yoga practices and techniques that could be considered, regardless of the level of flexibility or fitness, to achieve wellness.

There are many reasons for practicing yoga. Yoga focuses on the body's natural tendency toward health and self-healing. Its relaxation techniques can lessen chronic pain, such as lower back pain and arthritis. It can assist in lowering blood pressure and reducing

insomnia. It increases flexibility, muscle strength and tone. It can improve energy and vitality, and assist in the maintenance of a balanced metabolism. Yoga promotes cardio and circulatory health. For those who are physically active already, it can improve athletic performance and protect from injury.

I have practiced yoga for 25 years and have benefited from it — especially when the demands in my body and mind were at the highest. I have practiced rigorous styles and have benefited from restorative and therapeutic styles to address particular needs and injuries. I can only describe my practice as a testament to the capacity of yoga to evolve based on the needs and stages of a person's life. For me, yoga is about awareness. And, that awareness goes beyond physical wellbeing. One of the fundamental benefits of yoga is how it helps a person regain a sense of calm and attention to the present moment. It can help manage stress, whether it reveals itself as back or neck pain, sleeping problems, headaches, addictions, or even an inability to concentrate. Yoga

can be effective in developing coping skills, and its elements of meditation and breathing help improve a person's mental and emotional wellbeing, providing clarity, calmness, and a positive outlook in life.

While there are a variety of styles of yoga, most sessions typically include breathing exercises, physical postures called asanas that stretch and flex various muscle groups, and mindfulness practice via meditation or guided visualizations. Because there are so many different kinds of yoga styles and modalities, it is possible for anyone to learn. I teach primarily at Life.Love.Yoga in downtown Sisters together with other highly qualified teachers, and see students from all walks of life. From golfers who want to improve their swing, to war veterans that are caring and recuperating for injuries, work commuters who are looking for a way to minimize the stress of traveling, to older adults who are looking for ways to maintain health and vitality. I also have the marathon runners and gym fans who often come to class after a run or in

preparation for a competition. And, we always have the student that wants to come simply because a yoga class may be the only moment when he or she can check in physically, mentally and emotionally after a long week of work or play.

Whether a person considers himself a couch potato or a professional athlete, size and fitness levels do not matter because there are modifications for every yoga pose and beginner classes in every style. The idea is to explore one's needs and current limits, regain physical freedom to enjoy daily activities with greater vigor, rather than to strive for some pretzel-like perfection.


And, while advertisement and the student body in many studios makes it seem as if yoga practice is only for women, such a notion is a big misconception. Yoga is intended for everyone, no matter gender, age, or physical fitness level. In Sisters, we have the benefit of having access to a wide variety of styles both in our studio in the heart of town as well as in the local gyms, wellness centers

and athletic clubs. And, there are many of us, qualified teachers, who can guide a private session as well. There is a class to suit every body type or temperament.

For those who are active and do strength training, the best choice is likely to be a yoga style that focuses more on flexibility, such as restorative or yin yoga. Those who have an injury or live with a chronic medical condition such as arthritis can also benefit from restorative yoga as well as from Iyengar yoga, or a one-to-one session with a teacher to focus on alignment and unique needs. For those who are relatively healthy and want a challenge, ashtanga vinyasa or vinyasa flow could be a good choice.

Before making a decision, it is best to try a few of the most common styles of yoga and visit the classes of a few different teachers. All teachers have their own unique focus and training based on their practice and the teachers they have trained with. Once a favorite teacher and modality is discovered, regular attendance is needed to really reap its benefits.

SOLVING UNUSUAL & LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS



**ANXIETY • DEPRESSION
SLEEP • DIGESTION**

Dr. Kim Hapke,
NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE
& COUNSELING
Bridging Traditional & Holistic Medicine

971-409-0908
SISTERS ART WORKS BUILDING

Kim Hapke, ND

You've suffered for a while with a chronic condition. You've tried all kinds of approaches to treat the symptoms, but they keep coming back. You don't know where to turn next.

You owe yourself a visit to Kim Hapke, ND. This Doctor of Naturopathy has established her practice at Sisters Art Works, where she helps folks in Sisters improve their health and find more joy in their day-to-day lives.

Dr. Hapke works with herbal remedies, bodywork including massage, homeopathy, diet and behavioral changes and offers counseling to help get to the root of ailments and put you on the path toward a healthy, fulfilled life, unconstrained by your condition.



Dr. Hapke is well-versed in working with the powerful mind-body connection to identify issues that are barriers to good health — and to address them in a deep, effective and healthy way that can give you back your sense of control and well-being.

GET MOVING™



Since 1952
Therapeutic Associates
PHYSICAL THERAPY
AT SISTERS ATHLETIC CLUB

PHYSICAL THERAPY | AQUATIC THERAPY | POST-SURGICAL
SPORTS SPECIFIC TRAINING | STRENGTHENING & CONDITIONING

541-549-3574
1011 Desperado Trail, Suite 201
Sisters, OR 97759

www.therapeuticassociates.com/Sisters

Therapeutic Associates

Fall has fallen — winter's just down the road. That means that it's time to start getting to work on your ski conditioning.

Matt Kirchoff of Therapeutic Associates, along with trainer Andrew Loscutoff, will be offering a ski conditioning clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays through the month of November. Attending the clinic, focused on alignment and gluteal strength and dynamic warm-up techniques, will help you enjoy your season more — and give you a better shot at avoiding injury.

Therapeutic Associates has welcomed physical therapist Emily Dutton, who is at the clinic Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Dutton is helping Therapeutic Associates expand its offerings and its hours to keep folks in Sisters in the game.



And when you do get hurt and need their services, Therapeutic Associates offers a unique step-down program in conjunction with the adjacent Sisters Athletic Club to help you ease your way back into action.