



Yoga – Uniting All Aspects of Your Life **Yoga for Runners**

By Chris Covington, Editor-in-Chief, Cream No Sugar On-line Magazine, 3/6/2013

Yoga is an excellent way to incorporate a comprehensive mental and physical workout into your daily routine. CNS wanted to learn more about yoga so we reached out to Joanna Barrett of Joanna Barrett Yoga in the Boston area. She shared her insight and experience with us in a three part series on incorporating yoga into your fitness life, yoga for runners/walkers, and yoga for weight management. Thank you Joanna!

So whether or not you are considering yoga or are a long-time practitioner, we have good information for you. Here is our second interview in the series with Joanna.

Q: How can yoga complement a running regimen?

A: Yoga is an excellent complement to a running regimen. Yoga can help bring the body into balance and build strength and flexibility. It also helps alleviate chronic pain and prevent injuries. Yoga can help build awareness of body signals so a runner is more aware of any postural misalignments so she can correct them before pain or injury occur. The body awareness also teaches a runner to respect the body's limitations. Learning various breathe exercises can increase a runner's oxygen intake and breath awareness. This can soothe the sympathetic nervous system and relax the body.

Q: How should a runner incorporate yoga into her running routine?

A: Runners should find a class they enjoy and go to it regularly and consistently (at least once a week, if possible). A home practice that incorporates a short flow or a series of postures daily will greatly benefit a runner. Yoga postures can be incorporated into the warm-up and cool-down sections of a workout as well. These postures can help with balance, strength, flexibility, and mental clarity and concentration.

Q: Which discipline should a runner seek out in a studio?

A: There is not a single discipline that will work best for a runner. I encourage runners to try a variety of styles. Some may like a hot and sweaty practice, while others enjoy a strength building class or a stretching class. There are teachers who offer classes or workshops specifically designed for runners and athletes. Runners with shin splints or pain in the back, knees, or hips can try gentler styles of yoga to ease discomfort and improve imbalances within the body. If a runner is ramping up her practice or training for a race, complimenting it with a gentler yoga practice can feel nice and soothing.

Q: If a studio is not available, how can a runner incorporate yoga into her running routine?

A: Finding a teacher that offers private sessions is the best. The individual classes can focus on areas that may be injured, tight, or weak. Online classes, such as those offered through YogaGlo (<http://www.yogaglo.com/>) or Yogis Anonymous (<http://yogisanonymous.com/>), offer a variety of styles and levels with a selection of different teachers. Once a runner is

familiar with yoga, she can practice on her own. Incorporating postures into a running routine is beneficial.

Q: What questions should a runner ask when looking at studios?

A: When talking with a studio owner or teacher, it may be helpful to let them know that you're a runner, and any limitations or injuries you have. Even what might be considered a little thing, like tight hamstrings, can be good for a teacher to know so they can modify your postures with lightly bent knees to alleviate any straining. Teachers may incorporate poses into their sequences if they know you're a runner, such as adding IT band stretches and core strengtheners.

Q: What should a runner not do regarding yoga?

A: A runner should try not to push herself with yoga. Take time to ease into it and have an open mind. Runners should not ignore the body signals she receives. If something doesn't feel right, don't do it. Listen to the intuitive wisdom of the body. Runners should not be impatient. Positive results from yoga may take several sessions or longer.

Q: Anything else?

A: Good yoga resources for runners include:

Yoga Journal (Yoga for Runners, <http://www.yogajournal.com/lifestyle/192>)

Women's Health (Yoga for Runners, <http://www.womenshealthmag.com/yoga/yoga-for-runners>)

Active (Yoga for Runners: 3 Poses You Should Practice, <http://www.active.com/mindandbody/articles/Yoga-for-Runners--3-Poses-You-Should-Practice>)

Postures to try include:

Pigeon

Crescent lunge; quadriceps stretch variation; side stretch variation

Low lunge

Fallen warrior

Pyramid

Plank and side plank

Mountain

Seated cross-legged

Legs up the wall

Triangle

Happy baby

Forward fold

Dancer

Three-legged downward dog

Bow

Joanna Barrett is a Boston-based vinyasa, yin, and restorative yoga instructor. She has a passion for sharing the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of yoga with her students in both public and private classes, and encourages them to listen to the intuitive wisdom of the body. Joanna is a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT 200) through Yoga Alliance and a member of the International Association of Yoga Therapists. Her website is www.joannabarrettyoga.com