

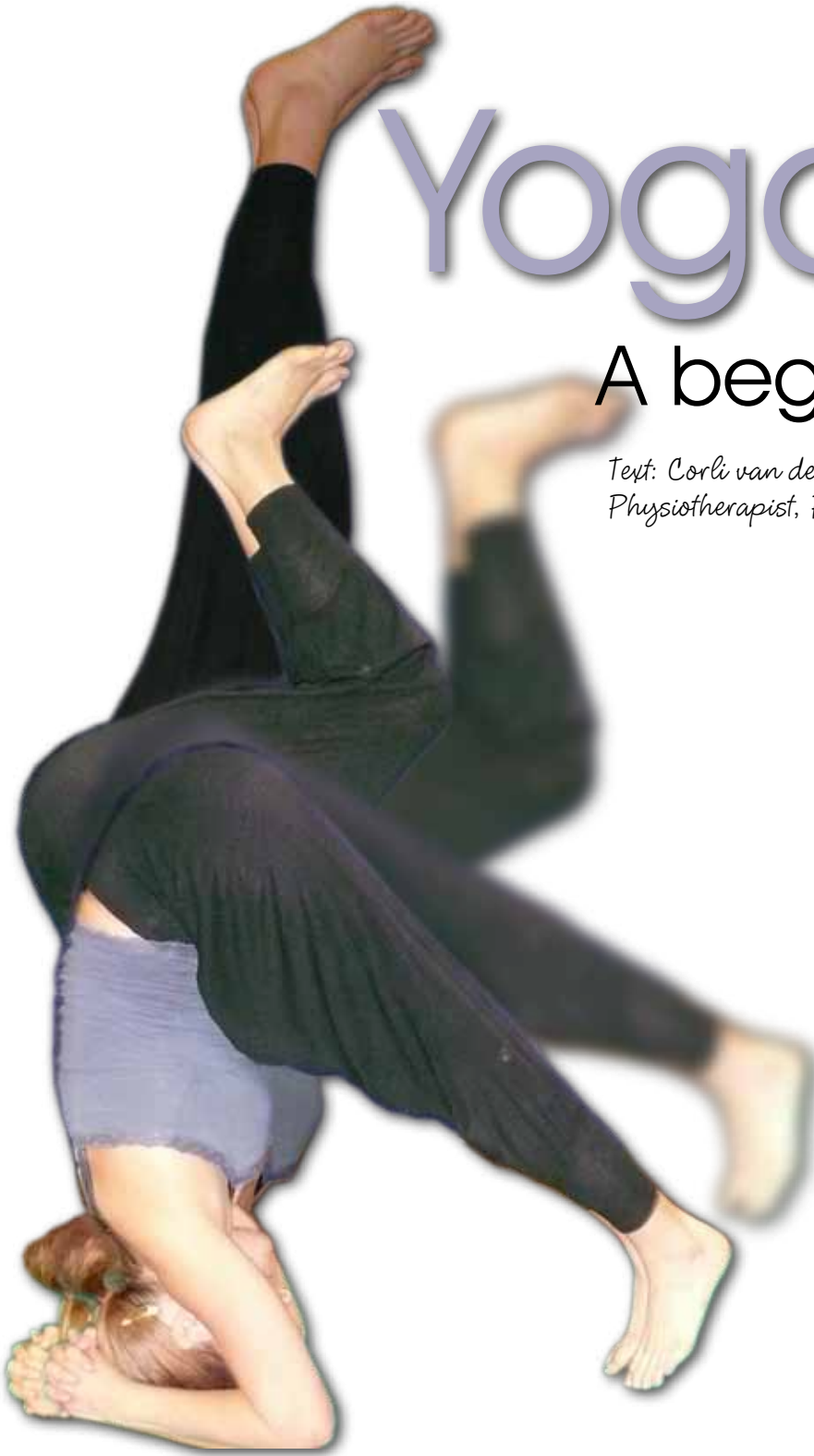
# Yoga 101

## A beginner's guide

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Yoga is probably one of the oldest and most misunderstood physical art forms. When you mention the word yoga to most people, it seems to conjure up pictures of super flexible people twisted into impossible poses. Partly true as a lot of the yoga postures practised are not positions we would get into during a normal day.

Yoga is an ancient Indian body of knowledge, not a religion, and the word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj" meaning to yoke, join or unite. This implies joining or integrating all aspects of the individual – body, mind and soul. Yoga was never intended to be an exercise. It was developed as a way to still the mind through working with the body and breath. An exercise in concentration, a form of moving meditation. For exactly this reason it is a wonderful adjunct to any athlete's regime. It teaches the athlete to control his or her body in sometimes new and weird positions, stay present in the moment and to handle physical challenge or discomfort. The exercises range from very easy to extremely hard, from postures that challenge your flexibility to handstands and a myriad of other stability exercises. What makes yoga different from just contortionist exercise and gymnastics is the intent and breath control. The focus is not on the end result but the practice itself. Not achieving but simply being.



### Different Styles of Yoga suited to Athletes

Style	Description
Ashtanga	A flowing sequence of movements. Six successive series increasing in difficulty. Builds strength and stamina.
Bikram	A set series of 26 postures performed in a heated room (40 ). Promotes flexibility and detoxification.
Power Yoga and Vinyasa Flow	Similar to ashtanga without the set sequences. Postures may be held for longer periods of time. Often done with music playing.
Iyengar	Iyengar is the form of yoga that focuses most on correct alignment and uses props like belts and blocks to achieve the best form. Slower than the above mentioned styles, but helps develop technically sound yoga practice.

## “The Monkey Mind” Yoga philosophy made easy

Try this easy exercise! Try for one minute to only focus your mind on one thing. Not so easy. A person's mind constantly fluctuates between different things, worries and lists of things to do. Our minds are easily distracted and this is the monkey mind. To quieten or calm the mind, you need more than one thing to focus on. While doing yoga you focus on breath and movement, not on goals or responsibilities. The idea is to be fully present in the moment and in doing so train to your fullest potential.

## Pilates vs Yoga

Pilates is a wonderful way to teach body awareness and increase core stability, but its advantages are also its disadvantages. In Pilates your ranges are fairly limited and all the movements are isolated and dissociated. Most classical Pilates exercises are done on your back on a mat. Yoga has more functional positions, a wide variety of standing exercises, balancing exercises and doesn't limit movement to the neutral position. Both of these disciplines link movement to breath, where as Pilates exhales through the mouth, yoga inhales and exhales through the nose. Yoga also incorporates different exercises manipulating and controlling your breath.

## Benefits of Yoga

- Core strength in Functional Positions
- Breath Control
- Increases Concentration and Focus
- Flexibility
- Strength
- Decreases Stress
- Power and Vinyasa flow Yoga can burn up to 1413 and 911 kilojoules in 90 minutes respectively
- Yoga improves your mood: in one study it was found to improve the GABA chemical's level by up to 27%. GABA is an amino acid and has an anti-anxiety effect.
- It decreases chronic pain. A study by the University of West Virginia found that after practising yoga for three months, volunteers reported a decrease of up to 70% in lower back pain. This also resulted in a significant decrease in the amount of pain medication taken.
- In a study published by the Journal of the American Dietetic Association it was found that there is a strong link between mindful eating and doing yoga. Mindful eating is chewing when hungry and stopping when full, not eat for emotional reasons and past the point of satiety 🌈

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