

## STRENGTH for the BODY & MIND

Yoga and meditation are two practices that provide physical and mental benefits. They help you increase strength, control of body and breath, flexibility and mental clarity as well as decrease stress levels. Yoga and meditation will not only make you feel fantastic, but help prevent pain and injury in the future. The best part is that anyone can participate! Whether you are sixteen or sixty, an athlete or just starting to get active, there is a practice that is right for you.



### A Little Bit of History

**Yoga is an ancient practice, originating in India more than 5,000 years ago.** It started as an oral tradition, handed down from Yogi to student and eventually found its way onto the written page. Yoga is essentially a journey towards self-discovery. This may surprise you, as the western model is very physically oriented. But original, authentic yoga, was actually a lot about sitting still with your thoughts, gaining a deeper knowledge of Self. Yogis eventually created physical postures to ease the burdens of sitting for long periods of time. It is these postures, or asanas, that people are most familiar with today.

**Meditation**, which is also an ancient practice, is simply put, focusing on one thing at a time and keeping your mind in the present. One can meditate in a guided class, sitting at home alone, or during daily routines.



### What Can These Practices Do For Me?

**Yoga practitioners may experience many of the same physical benefits as Pilates practitioners.** Body control and awareness are important concepts in yoga, which looks to bridge the gap between physical and mental exercise. Spirituality is often incorporated as well. Many people may not initially realize yoga's benefits, but then for instance, they start observing that they react less quickly to common stressors. Or perhaps something as simple as they feel lighter in their movements and have more endurance as their day goes on. Jill Voorhis, St. Petersburg Yoga Studio Director, says *"I personally remember feeling more confident in public - I walked taller and felt a certain ease about my interactions with others."* Yoga can also be used as a form of therapy. Inversion classes that utilize a swing can help rebuild stability in the joints, balance hormones, and promote flushing of

the circulatory and lymphatic systems. Yoga traction therapy (developed by Chris Acosta) can be used to treat back pain, spinal compressions, herniated/bulging disks, hyper kyphosis/lordosis, and arthritis among ailments. There are also therapeutic classes designed to help alleviate physical, emotional, and mental pain.

**Meditation may seem difficult to people at first.** A common misconception is that you need to "shut off" your mind when meditating. This is not true. It is about focusing on one thing at a time and staying present. When your mind is in the present, you generally have a very calm and alert awareness and a greater sense of clarity. Often meditators are able to make a deeper connection with themselves. Meditation can lower blood pressure, decrease Cortisol levels, ease anxiety and depression, and help the chronically ill deal with pain and suffering.

## Which Type of Yoga is Right for Me?

**Over the years, many different styles of yoga have been developed.** A simple web search will bring up names like Iyengar, Bikram, Ashtanga, Hatha, Power, Nidra and many more. Each of these styles falls under these broader definitions:

**Gentle** most of the postures in these classes are sitting.

**Flow** a more invigorating class, but somewhat slow in pace - with standing, sitting and balance postures that link together into a flowing sequence.

**Power** similar to flow above but more vigorous and somewhat faster moving.

**Meditation** various forms of sitting or lying down quietly. Often guided by a teacher based on themes or various mindfulness practices.

**So which is right for you? Do your research.** Ask a yoga teacher, your physical therapist, read testimonies and most importantly ask yourself what part of your life needs balance? A person in the corporate world who is constantly on the go might be drawn to a faster paced class like power flow, however it would be more beneficial for them to take slow flow and meditation classes. Here are two other examples:

A student trying to lose weight: a combination of meditation classes for self-reflection on what habits and lifestyle issues are creating the weight gain, and a flow class for toning and increased metabolism would be beneficial.

The marathon runner who is constantly fatigued and tight - gentle classes for passive stretching, stress reduction and relaxation.



## How Do I Get Started?

**While there is no shortage of rehabilitation, wellness and yoga studios in the Tampa Bay area, we suggest you start right here in St Pete!** At **Back 2 Normal**, physical therapist Lisa Chase, has an eclectic approach to healing and performance. While she incorporates a variety of movement experiences to help you move better, feel stronger and get you out of pain, she also feels strongly that collaborating with other health, medical and wellness experts to help you achieve your goals is essential for total body wellness. Several of our wellness programs include discounts offered through St Petersburg Yoga to help you make the mind body connection.

When it comes to yoga and meditation practice, **Back 2 Normal** has worked closely with St. Petersburg Yoga for several years. Founded by Chris Acosta, St. Petersburg Yoga has served the community for over 20 years. Chris has helped many of our clients and with his personal experience of having scoliosis and severe back pain, he learned first hand how yoga heals and changes someone's life forever. A variety of classes are offered, ranging from restorative and meditation to power and hot yoga.

For more information on Lisa Chase and Back 2 Normal's services, check out our website at [www.back2normalpt.com](http://www.back2normalpt.com)

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For more information on St. Petersburg Yoga and Chris Acosta's amazing story, check out their website at [StPeteYoga.com](http://StPeteYoga.com)

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