



A Bit of Yoga You Can  
do Right Now

May  
2008

A free column by Jinjer Stanton

## A World Turned Upside Down, or Growing Younger in the Age of Yoga

by Jinjer Stanton

It happens little by little. The habits of a life-time refine themselves and become part of who we are. Our jobs make demands on us that differ from job to job. Office workers sit for long hours without moving. Construction workers often work long hours exposed to the elements doing physically demanding work. Restaurant workers spend their share of long hours on their feet without going anywhere. Each profession, over time, leaves its mark on the workers that serve it.

Leisure activities leave marks as well from couch potato status to arthritis and shin splints. Gravity aids and abets every single body habit in crafting the constellation of attributes we identify as "aging".

I, personally, have seen 30 year olds acting 90. I have heard otherwise reasonable people accept the results of habits of body as the natural and unavoidable consequences of adding years to their portfolios. Seemingly elderly people grow younger as they balance the habits of body built up over their lifetimes with a regular yoga practice. Even with only one workout a week people can grow younger, stronger, more supple over time. I have seen it.

In yoga tradition, the inverted postures are particularly identified as reversing the aging process. All those years (decades) spent with your head closer to heaven than any other body part have allowed gravity to pull everything in one direction. When you bring your shapely behind (or even just your legs) up above your head by any means, you reverse the effects of gravity on the body for as long as you keep it (or them) up there.

As a by-product, you clear your head whether stuffed up because of a head cold or sluggish from lack of sleep no matter how many or few

decades you have under your belt.

Inverted postures range from gentle and restorative to strenuous and invigorating. Listen to your own inner promptings when choosing the one for you on any given day. The following can be adjusted for a number of fitness (or flexibility) levels. Just stop at the point that feels right for you.

Begin by placing a kitchen or folding chair with its back braced firmly against a wall or counter with plenty of space in front of it. Lie down on the floor with your hips up against the front of the chair. Rest your calves on the chair seat. That's it. The lowest level of difficulty. Just relax for five or ten moments in this position.

For the second level, bring your feet to the front edge of the chair seat. Press them against the seat as you lift your hips up into the air and support them with your hands. Hold this position for as long as it feels reasonable to you.

If you feel like taking this to the next level, while maintaining support beneath your waist, push off with first one foot, then the other so that both legs are up in the air. Again, maintain this position only as long as it feels good. Then reverse the process to come back down.

If you do either 2nd or 3rd level inversion, be sure to do a back bend to balance the effort.

Take a moment before you begin to pay attention to how you feel, then take another moment once you've finished to do the same and notice what's changed. This is a touch of consciousness you can bring to any exercise and doing it regularly will build better communication between body and mind which can only be positive.

The spirit in me salutes the spirit in you.  
We're all in bodies together.

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## Yoga and Growing Younger

According to Yoga Journal regular hath yoga practice curtails and even reverses the affects of aging on the body by maintaining or restoring muscle strength and flexibility, neuromuscular coordination, range of motion in the joints, circulatory and respiratory efficiency (including cardiac output and return of blood to the heart), bone strength and structural integrity of the joints, bowel health, immune system functioning, and much more.

The positive affects of yoga on the body have a ripple affect on all aspects of life like how one responds to stress and general wellll-being. Yoga brings us into harmony with our bodies and enables us to listen to the body when it's trying to tell us what it needs.

I have literally seen people grow younger as a result of regular yoga practice. If you want to know more about yoga and aging, I highly recommend *The New Yoga for People over 50* by Suza Francina. This book addresses many of the issues older beginners may need to address like arthritis, menopause and heart health. It is friendly and accessible as well as chock full of information. It recommends specific exercises for specific physical challenges along with offering options using props to make some of the poses easier to attain and maintain.



## Tai Chi — Qi Gong at Lake Hiawatha

In China Tai Chi has kept generations of Chinese young and supple. Learn this series of ancient Chinese breathing exercises called “Qi Gong” to assist you through your daily activities with a calmer mind, a clearer sense of focus and greater well-being. Gain more physical flexibility, balance, energy and a greater connection between mind, body and spirit. Learning the Qi Gong exercises is preparation for learning the Grand Long Form of Kuang Ping Tai Chi Chuan. Your instructor, Ellen, has practiced Tai Chi and Qi Gong for 22 years. For more information about classes contact Lake Hiawatha Recreation Center, 612/722-9703. Monthly cost is \$25.



## Jinjer Stanton's Yoga Classes

7 to 8:30 Monday evenings at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church <http://www.htlcmpls.org/> (generally in the Mary/Martha room). Call 612/722-9703 for more information about this class.

If daytime or weekend classes work better for you, Contact **Hiawatha Lake Park** (612/370-4930) for classes Saturday mornings from 11:15 am to 12:30 pm or for the Monday afternoon class that goes from 2 to 3:15 pm.

These yoga classes are fun as well as mindful and beneficial. The Monday evening class lasts an hour and a half. The other classes are one and a quarter hours long. In all classes the last ten minutes are devoted to meditation so our bodies can fully integrate the benefits of the class just past. Wear clothes that are easy to move in and if you have a mat, bring it. Other nice helps to bring are a bath towel and woven fabric belt. We look forward to meeting you. You can call me at 612/722-9703 for more information.



## Yoga Bytes:

Yoga Bytes is a message intended to bring yoga to your consciousness regularly by suggesting a little something you can work on right now. For more information and additional Yoga Bytes go to [www.jinjerstanton.com](http://www.jinjerstanton.com). *Yoga Bytes is published in cooperation with Lake Hiawatha Park.*