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Bodywork
Katrina Repko



Pain and no Gain

Even with all the precautions I now take to avoid injury, and in spite of a sounder mental approach to life than I ever had in my earlier days, I have recently accumulated an array of yoga-related problems that has left me feeling less than dynamic.

I took my first yoga class in my hometown of Calgary, Canada, over 10 years ago, attracted both by the promise of more flexibility (which I hoped would enhance my other sports activities) and a special introductory offer of a dollar a class. Probably the best buck I ever spent, I quickly became very enthusiastic about

yoga and began taking up to five sabbath classes a week, which is a lot for a novice. But I've always liked a challenge. Because I was strong and had been doing sports since I was a child, I found that I could do quite difficult poses fairly quickly.

It was not long before my enthusiasm backfired. I began to feel pain in my sacrospinous joint and knees from doing multiple forward bends and other positions. (What I didn't discover until recently is that I am hyper-mobile too much stretching can actually destabilise my body.) But pain didn't deter me from my practice. For years I just worked through any niggling injuries.

No more. The older I got, the less acceptable pain has become, so I have had to adapt my routine. I would never give up my asana, but I now spend as much time on my mental practice—meditation—as on my physical. And I have finally admitted to myself that there are certain poses for which my body type is unsuited, and however much effort I expend on trying to master these

poses, I can only expect average results. But even with all the precautions I now take to avoid injury and in spite of a sounder mental approach to life than I ever had in my earlier days, I have recently accumulated an array of yoga-related problems that has left me feeling less than dynamic. A nagging pain in my left knee and

lower back which certain poses—Urdhva Matsya Sarvangasana (Upward Dog) and Padmasana (Lotus), for example—seem to exacerbate.

A very tight chest, neck and shoulders, I gave birth to my first child two years ago, and the sequences that used to work so well no longer seem to give me the release I need, even when I am careful to ensure that I do all of the postures with correct alignment, modifying whenever necessary. Too often I have been leaving classes with my upper body feeling tighter than when I walked in.

An overactive and unruly mind, in spite of the time I spend meditating. I have temporarily lost the path to deep relaxation and release. I used to lift off into a free-floating haze in savasana or meditation, and recently I have remained firmly moored to the earth.

I decided that I could use some outside help, and a fellow yoga teacher suggested that I try bodywork as a complement to my yoga. It made sense, she said.

Bodywork and yoga are similarly able to increase flexibility, muscle length, range of motion, and blood flow, release toxins, make the body less prone to injury, promote relaxation, and cultivate inner awareness.

But which type of bodywork? I wanted to experiment with those therapies that, like yoga, have a holistic approach, taking into account not just the body, but also the mind and the spirit.

After researching the field, I tried ten different therapies. Each was excellent in its own way, but for reasons of space, and in order to concentrate on those therapies most appropriate for this particular yoga, the more detailed reports that follow are restricted to Rolfing, Thai Massage, Ayurvedic Massage, and Cranio-Ciroprathy.

At the end of the article there is also a brief summary of the other therapies I tried.