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Yoga is best for back pain sufferers

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21 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Yoga is best for back pain sufferers

New research from America suggests that yoga could help millions of people who have back problems. In an article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers found that yoga was a better treatment for back pain than standard therapy. A study in Washington State saw 101 adults follow a choice of 12-week treatments. They chose between a course in yoga, standard therapeutic exercise or following instructions in a self-help book. The results showed yoga reduced pain more quickly and had longer lasting benefits. Dr. Karen Sherman said this was because of "mind and body effects".

The article states that most treatments for backaches do not provide much pain relief and that exercise is one of the best therapies. However, the researchers say the effects of exercise are often small. They suggest that yoga, which combines physical exercise with breathing, "may benefit patients with back pain simply because it involves exercise or because of its effects on mental focus". They conducted their study because they found no published articles in western medical books that evaluated yoga for chronic low back pain. Millions of people worldwide practice yoga every day.

WARM-UPS

1. ACHES 'N' PAINS: Do you suffer from aches and pains? In pairs / groups, talk about how often you get headaches, toothaches, stomachaches, backaches, muscle pain, etc. What do you do for pain relief? Do you know anyone else who always complains about his / her aches and pains?

2. THERAPIES: Have you tried or would you try any of the therapies below to make your pain disappear? Talk with other students to make sure you know what they are. What do you think of them? With your partner(s), rank them in order of which you think is most effective.

- Yoga
- Acupuncture
- Herbal medicine
- Reiki
- Hypnotherapy
- Standard medicine
- Aromatherapy
- Homeopathy

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

New research / yoga / back pain / treatments / exercise / self-help books / pain / mind and body / articles / mental focus / millions of people/ practicing things

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. THE BACK: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about our back and how to look after it. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. Will you do more to look after your back from now?

5. YOGA OPINIONS: Ask your partner(s) if they agree with these opinions:

- a. Yoga will become a very common treatment in hospitals around the world.
- b. Yoga classes should be taught to children in schools.
- c. Yoga is only for vegetarians and peace campaigners.
- d. We have a lot to learn about yoga and other ancient therapies.
- e. Yoga looks really boring.
- f. I don't want to waste 30 minutes of my day in the lotus position.
- g. I'll wait for more proof from scientists that yoga works.
- h. All the people I know who do yoga are very relaxed and happy.

6. YOGA: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with yoga. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Yoga is millions of years old. | T / F |
| b. A study says yoga is better for back pain than standard therapy. | T / F |
| c. Adults chose between yoga and a self-help book in a back-pain study. | T / F |
| d. A doctor said "mind and body effects" help bring pain relief. | T / F |
| e. Exercise is amazingly effective in providing pain relief. | T / F |
| f. Yoga combines physical exercise with breathing. | T / F |
| g. Western medical books are full of articles about yoga and back pain. | T / F |
| h. Billions of people do yoga every day. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. suggests | regular |
| b. found | do |
| c. standard | how-to |
| d. self-help | says |
| e. reduced | carried out |
| f. states | indicates |
| g. provide | severe |
| h. conducted | give |
| i. chronic | lessened |
| j. practice | discovered |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. research from America suggests that | and had longer lasting benefits |
| b. yoga was a better treatment for | of 12-week treatments |
| c. follow a choice | of exercise are often small |
| d. following instructions | do not provide much pain relief |
| e. yoga reduced pain more quickly | physical exercise with breathing |
| f. most treatments for backaches | yoga could help millions of people |
| g. exercise is one | practice yoga every day |
| h. researchers say the effects | in a self-help book |
| i. yoga, which combines | back pain than standard therapy |
| j. Millions of people worldwide | of the best therapies |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WRONG WORDS: In pairs / groups, find the six incorrect words in each paragraph. Replace them with better words.

Yoga is best for back pain sufferers

New **search** from America suggests that yoga could help millions of people who have **black** problems. In an article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers found that yoga was a better treatment for back **paint** than standard therapy. A study in Washington State saw 101 adults follow a choice of 12-week treatments. They chose between a course in yoga, standard therapeutic exercise or **writing** instructions in a self-help book. The results **showered** yoga reduced pain more quickly and had longer lasting benefits. Dr. Karen Sherman said this was because of “**mint** and body effects”.

The article states that most treatments for backaches do not provide much **Spain** relief and that exercise is one of the best therapies. However, the researchers say the effects of exercise are often **microscopic**. They suggest that yoga, which **combs** physical exercise with breathing, “may benefit patients with back pain simply because it **revolves** exercise or because of its effects on mental focus”. They conducted their study because they found no published **comics** in western medical books that evaluated yoga for chronic low back pain. Millions of people worldwide practice **yogurt** every day.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Yoga is best for back pain sufferers

New research from America _____ that yoga could help millions of people who have back problems. In an article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers found that yoga was a better _____ for back pain than _____ therapy. A study in Washington State saw 101 adults follow a _____ of 12-week treatments. They chose between a _____ in yoga, standard therapeutic exercise or following instructions in a self-help book. The results showed yoga reduced pain more quickly and had _____ lasting benefits. Dr. Karen Sherman said this was because of "mind and body _____".

The _____ states that most treatments for backaches do not provide much pain _____ and that exercise is one of the best therapies. However, the researchers say the effects of exercise are often small. They suggest that yoga, which _____ physical exercise with breathing, "may benefit patients with back pain simply because it involves exercise or because of its effects on mental _____". They conducted their study because they found no published articles in _____ medical books that evaluated yoga for chronic low back pain. Millions of people worldwide _____ yoga every day.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'back'** and **'ache'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WRONG WORDS: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ACHES 'N' PAINS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about aches and pains and treatments.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| • millions | • provide |
| • published | • small |
| • adults | • combines |
| • chose | • focus |
| • book | • western |
| • lasting | • millions |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of yoga?
- c. Have you ever tried or would you ever try yoga?
- d. What's the difference between an ache and a pain?
- e. Which is worse, stomachache or heartache?
- f. Do you think scientists will find a cure for all aches and pains one day?
- g. What's the worst pain you've ever experienced?
- h. Do you think scientists will understand why yoga is good for us?
- i. Do you think all alternative therapies work?
- j. Do you practice something every day?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you often suffer from aches and pains?
- d. Are you good at knowing what to do for aches and pains?
- e. Which is worse, an ache or a pain?
- f. Would you rather suffer from physical or mental pain?
- g. Do you think focusing your mind on your body can help reduce pain?
- h. Why do you think yoga isn't more accepted, especially as it is thousands of years old?
- i. Do you think yoga is too slow to fit in today's fast-paced life?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ACHES 'N' PAINS: In pairs / groups, agree on the best treatment for the following aches and pains. Decide whether yoga could be of use in relieving the pain.

ACHE/PAIN	TREATMENT	WOULD YOGA HELP?
Backache		
Toothache		
Stomachache		
Muscle pain		
Hangover		
Heartache		
Financial pain		

Change partners. Compare your treatments. Argue and agree on which of your treatments is best.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on yoga. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. THE BACK: Make a poster about the back – it's anatomy, how to injure it and how to look after it. Show your poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all include similar things?

4. PAIN: Write an essay describing a time you were in great pain. What happened to start the pain? What did you do for pain relief? Might yoga have helped? Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did anyone have the same problem?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. suggests | indicates |
| b. found | discovered |
| c. standard | regular |
| d. self-help | how-to |
| e. reduced | lessened |
| f. states | says |
| g. provide | give |
| h. conducted | carried out |
| i. chronic | severe |
| j. practice | do |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. research from America suggests that | yoga could help millions of people |
| b. yoga was a better treatment for | back pain than standard therapy |
| c. follow a choice | of 12-week treatments |
| d. following instructions | in a self-help book |
| e. yoga reduced pain more quickly | and had longer lasting benefits |
| f. most treatments for backaches | do not provide much pain relief |
| g. exercise is one | of the best therapies |
| h. researchers say the effects | of exercise are often small |
| i. yoga, which combines | physical exercise with breathing |
| j. Millions of people worldwide | practice yoga every day |

WRONG WORD:

Yoga is best for back pain sufferers

New **research** from America suggests that yoga could help millions of people who have **back** problems. In an article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers found that yoga was a better treatment for back **pain** than standard therapy. A study in Washington State saw 101 adults follow a choice of 12-week treatments. They chose between a course in yoga, standard therapeutic exercise or **following** instructions in a self-help book. The results **showed** yoga reduced pain more quickly and had longer lasting benefits. Dr. Karen Sherman said this was because of "**mind** and body effects".

The article states that most treatments for backaches do not provide much **pain** relief and that exercise is one of the best therapies. However, the researchers say the effects of exercise are often **small**. They suggest that yoga, which **combines** physical exercise with breathing, "may benefit patients with back pain simply because it **involves** exercise or because of its effects on mental focus". They conducted their study because they found no published **articles** in western medical books that evaluated yoga for chronic low back pain. Millions of people worldwide practice **yoga** every day.