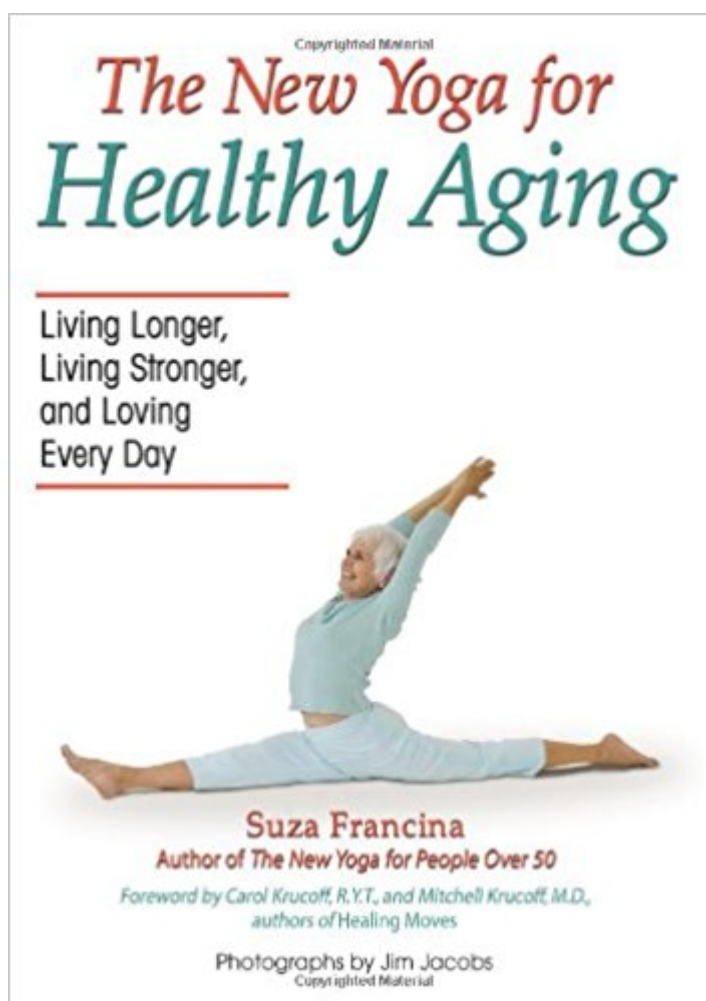


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# The New Yoga For Healthy Aging: Living Longer, Living Stronger And Loving Every Day



## Synopsis

A step-by-step guide for the millions of baby boomers who want one simple practice for feeling and looking great—yoga! One in five Americans is now moving toward the age bracket of "sixty and beyond," and while many are calling sixty the "new forty," this milestone is the perfect time to take stock in good health. One form of exercise that is proven to prevent or alleviate a host of physical and mental ailments for the last 5,000 years is yoga. Now, under the guidance of a qualified and well-known Iyengar yoga teacher, who is also the author of *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, readers can reap the benefits of yoga with this gentle and clear guide written specifically with today's baby boomers in mind. Filled with clear instructions, including the use of yoga props and modified poses, plus crisp follow-along photographs, *The New Yoga for Healthy Aging* takes readers step by step through the asanas (poses) that can prevent or lessen ailments such as osteoporosis, hip fractures, chronic pain, arthritis, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. With heartfelt interviews and tips from some of America's most active yoga teachers and their older students—each sharing wisdom, insights and successes—readers will discover a source of inspiration that will help their practice evolve into more than just those moments they spend on the mat.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Suza Francina is a certified Iyengar Yoga instructor with over thirty years of experience. She is the author of several books and articles for AARP, Yoga Journal, LA Yoga, The Cleveland Clinic Arthritis Advisor, Prevention, Senior Life, and ELDR magazine. Her website is

Excerpts from The New Yoga for Healthy Aging At the age of eighty-seven, Iyengar joked that he invented props when he was a young man so that he could still practice yoga in his old age. I still recall the words of my first yoga teacher, nearing sixty, telling me that she started yoga because she was looking for "exercise without exhaustion." When we are young, the physical energy of youth seems inexhaustible. Even if we wear ourselves out, we quickly bounce back. Around midlife, sometimes sooner, we become more aware of the depletion of our natural energy reserves. Our bodies begin to show signs of wear and tear. While the natural aging process cannot be halted, yoga offers a way to slow it down, conserve health, and rebuild our precious energy reserves. Yoga is the art and science of spiritual, mental, and physical transformation. It is a classical Indian discipline that is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was when it was developed thousands of years ago. Yoga is a nonviolent way of life that encourages each individual to feel whole and to realize his or her inner potential. The word yoga comes from a Sanskrit root that means yoke, join, unite, or make whole. This ancient discipline cultivates the union between individual and universal consciousness. The exact origins of yoga are uncertain, but its practices and principles predate written history. In the Indus Valley (now Pakistan), archaeologists have uncovered 5,000-year-old carvings of adepts in yoga positions. The science of yoga was originally passed down orally from teacher to student and was codified in written form about 2,000 years ago. The Yoga Sutras, by Patanjali, form the foundation upon which the structure of yoga has been built. Yoga is not a religion, but its teachings have been influenced by various religions, traditions, and sacred scriptures. Ancient texts present holistic views that encompass the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of the practitioner. Over the ages, different forms of yoga have emerged to blend with particular philosophical and religious beliefs practiced by the people of those times and places. Today, millions of people worldwide practice many diversified yoga styles that stem from a common ancient source.

**Yoga Asanas: Practical Tools for Life** A yoga pose is known by the Sanskrit term asana. The terms, pose, asana, and posture are used interchangeably in this book. Asana is the positioning of the body in various standing, lying down, upside-down, or seated postures. Asanas are one of yoga's most significant and practical tools for integrating all aspects of a human being's body, mind, and spirit. The word healing comes from the root "to make whole."

Among the many health benefits that set yoga apart from other forms of physical exercise is the effect that yoga postures and breathing practices have on the vitality of our organs and glands. This book describes the effect that asanas have on all the systems of the body. Yoga's inverted

poses are particularly important in the later years as they have a powerful effect on the neuroendocrine system by allowing fresh, oxygenated blood to flow to the glands in the head and neck. According to Iyengar, "In each asana, different organs are placed in different anatomical positions, and are squeezed and spread, dampened and dried, heated and cooled. The organs are supplied with fresh blood and are gently massaged, relaxed, and toned into a state of optimum health."

**Iyengar Yoga and Yoga Props** B. K. S. Iyengar is widely credited with the development of practicing yoga with the help of props. Although the use of props was known earlier in crude form, Iyengar evolved both their use and the sequences of asanas commonly practiced today. He categorized groups of poses according to anatomical structure, physiological functioning and psychological effect. Iyengar's early writings describe how he began experimenting with ordinary, everyday objects such as walls, chairs, stools, blocks, bolsters, blankets, and belts to help his students move deeper into postures. By providing more height, weight, and support, he discovered that props helped students of all ages and all levels understand and retain key movements and subtle adjustments of the body. These discoveries inspired him to experiment further and to create props adjusted to suit individual needs. Today the therapeutic use of props for special populations is one of the most distinguishing features of Iyengar yoga and one that many other schools (styles) of yoga are integrating into their curriculum. Iyengar's innovations in the understanding, practice, and teachings of yoga are described in great detail in his books and videos. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health* illustrates the use of sequences of poses supported with props to treat or prevent over eighty ailments. Iyengar demystified what had previously been a somewhat secret, exclusive, and inaccessible art. He made yoga immensely practical and accessible to ordinary men and women, including those who begin in the later years.

**What Are Props and Why Do We Use Them?** In the world of yoga, a prop is any object that provides height, weight, or support and helps you stretch, strengthen, balance, relax, or improve your body alignment. Props are used both for therapeutic purposes, as previously mentioned, and to teach specific actions such as "lifting the kneecaps," "elongating the spine," "opening the chest," and others, which you will hear repeated over and over again in yoga classes. Props also help you stay in poses for a longer time and conserve your energy, allowing the nervous system to relax. They can be used to make postures more challenging; to safely stretch farther; to work in a deeper, stronger way; and to expand, open, and blossom in a pose. In yoga we are asking the body to "work against the grain." We are asking the body to let go of the death grip that habit and conditioning have on us. Props help us to accept this revolutionary (and evolutionary) process. Props include sticky mats (also referred to as "yoga mats"),

blankets, belts, blocks, benches, wall ropes, sandbags, chairs, and other objects that help students experience the various yoga poses more profoundly. The ancient yogis used wood logs, stones, and ropes to help their practice. Many common features of our homes can also serve as props: floors, walls, corners, doors, doorways, hallways, stairs, ledges, windowsills, kitchen counters, even the kitchen sink! Using yoga props makes postures safer and more accessible. Most older people are quite stiff by the time they start yoga, and props allow them to practice poses they would not ordinarily be able to do. Older students also frequently come to yoga with problems, ranging from back and neck pain to knee problems to old injuries. The more problems a student has, the more useful yoga props are. Props allow you to hold poses longer, so you can experience their healing effects. By supporting the body in the yoga posture, muscles can lengthen in a passive, nonstrenuous way. By opening the body, the use of props also helps to improve blood circulation and breathing capacity. For example, if you are unable to bend forward and bring your hands to the floor without straining, you can place your hands on a chair or wall. As the backs of your legs become more flexible, you will find that you can put your hands on a lower prop, such as a bench or a block. Props can still be used when the student wants to practice the pose in a more restorative way, even though he or she is capable of practicing the pose independently. Supporting the body with props opens the door to restorative yoga, which not only allows you to exercise without exerting any effort but simultaneously relaxes and reenergizes you. This is critical during times when we find ourselves feeling too tired to exercise and then feeling even more tired because we are not exercising. The creative use of props expands the help a teacher can give, especially when teaching a class with students of various levels of ability. For example, students who are not strong enough to practice inversions on their own can safely do so supported by ropes suspended from the wall or ceiling. In this way inversions can be performed without strain, and the student can receive the benefits of the pose. Props are also used to teach students how a pose done correctly should feel. A rope hanging from a wall hook or doorknob and placed at the top of the legs in Downward-Facing Dog Pose, Adho Mukha Svanasana, allows the student to stretch the torso and arms as far forward as possible. Because the rope pulls the student's weight back into the legs, it helps the student experience the elongation of the abdomen and the deep muscles of the torso in the pose. The head can rest on a bolster or pillow. In this way, a wonderful, passive stretch is experienced. The student gets a taste of what it feels like to let go in a pose, to relax, and enjoy it. The use of props facilitates imprinting of the correct action in the pose so that the student understands it when the prop has been removed. By using props, students who need to conserve their energy can practice more strenuous poses without overexerting themselves. People with

chronic illness can use props to practice without undue strain and fatigue. Props are adapted to each student's body type and flexibility. They are especially helpful to anyone who may avoid certain poses because of fear, problems with balance due to loss of hearing and eyesight, pain, or other limitations. In therapeutic situations, props are invaluable. People who have scoliosis (curvature of the spine), rounded back, or other chronic postural problems can significantly improve their posture by stretching with the help of a prop. Iyengar introduced props into the modern practice of yoga to allow all practitioners access to the benefits of the postures regardless of physical condition, age, or length of study. He also explored in depth how these modified poses could help people recover from illness or injury or psychological trauma. Iyengar and his teachers have worked with Western doctors with great success in the fields of heart and immune disease and spinal and orthopedic problems. Props help all practitioners including both the most advanced students and those of advanced years to receive the deep benefits of postures held for sustained periods of time.

Excellent explanation of the way yoga helps our bodies remain healthy as we age. The descriptions and photos of modified postures are welcome. And the stories of people in their 70s, 80s & 90s still doing yoga are inspirational. The book also has chapters that address some of the common ailments that affect older people and how yoga can play a role in recovering from or managing those diseases. I especially appreciate the frequent reminders that it's not about pushing yourself to do the most extreme postures; it is about doing what you are able to do to keep your body functional for as long as possible. I am a 60+ beginner at yoga, practicing mostly at home with books & videos as my teachers. This book has prompted me to take some private instruction at a studio with rope walls because I want to do those beneficial inversions, but I want to do them safely!

I was looking for a book that would give gentle yoga poses, beginning with very easy and building up to harder poses, for those over 60. This book is mostly text, lots of verbiage and no lists at all. Very scattershot and completely useless for what I need. Very disappointed.

With the innumerable yoga books on the market and the attempts of companies trying to make a buck of the yoga boom I am leary of buying any products, including books, marketed for yoga. Also, from my own experiences I feel many reviews give an exaggerated view of the books. However, this book is truly a good book. I am 49 yrs old and have been practicing yoga for almost 5 years, two to four times a day. I am constantly trying to find out more about books, DVDs, websites etc on yoga

related items in order to improve and deepen my practice. I am glad I bought this one. For someone who recovered from a severe and incapacitating lower back injury with the practice of yoga asanas, this book is a reaffirmation of my own experiences. Had I not taken to an asana practice, I know for a fact that my injury would have made a "cash cow" out of me for the "medical professionals" in our health care system. More importantly the book offers tremendous inspiration, hope and encouragement to the aging -- which includes all -- and people recovering from chronic pain. It does this by sketching the lives of those who have been practicing yoga asanas. I assure you that if you are serious about your mental, physical and emotional health, and if you have had a year of yoga and want to give your practice a boost then this book will not let you down. It will confirm your realizations and build on them regarding the healing potential of yoga asanas. I have already bought two copies and will be buying numerous more to give to everyone I know. This will save them a lot of pain and suffering as they grow older, not to mention the expenses of a medical system that is absolutely out of control. In my opinion and experiences medical science itself is shallow and flawed despite the many sincere practitioners. People suffering from chronic ailments are a testimony to this claim. The writer has done a very good job of writing this book. Thank you Suza.

Great book for those of mature age & want to stay in good shape to prevent your muscles & joints from withering away. Life is good! And this book has so much other good information to help you achieve your goals!!!

As a 60-year-old beginning yoga student, I'm happy to have Suza Francina's new book. It is full of both inspiration and useful practical information. As I struggle alongside the 20-somethings in my yoga class, I sometimes wonder just what this or that pose is supposed to do for me. This book explains in detail the physiological benefits of groups of poses and individual poses. As it's become obvious that a once a week class is not enough to progress in yoga, I also appreciate Francina's clear instructions for practicing at home with the help of readily available props such as chairs and walls. I love the prescription for a "daily yoga vitamin," and it's encouraging to know that this simple sequence is enough to be beneficial. I also love the real stories of people practicing yoga in their 60's and even into their 90's.

Great description of the benefits and philosophy of yoga. The focus is on seniors without being patronizing. Photos are excellent. Stories featuring individuals are engaging. This book is a keeper. Very inspiring!

This book is stellar. It has great information on teaching yoga to seniors. Good pictures, great explanations and modifications. Really have found it useful.

Any seniors taking yoga classes or wanting to try yoga, should read this book first. It's inspiring and will alert them to any possible problems they might encounter in class that could injure them. I am over 55 and have been doing yoga for about 10 years and I am ready to ease into a more senior style of practice. This is the perfect book for that. Our teacher just read the book and was inspired to get us up in the headstand she saw in Suza's book using two chairs which makes it so doable for us! Suza's book is a must read for any teacher working with older students, new or experienced, and especially younger teachers. I refer to it often.

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