

Features of Iyengar Yoga

Alignment: Biomechanical principals apply to the muscular and skeletal body. The art of refinement while practicing reconditions the body and the nervous system to work efficiently. "To bring a part of the body in correct alignment, you have to work with the whole body. To bring the whole body in correct alignment, you have to work each and every part of the body. When performing asanas, no part of the body should be kept idle."

Sequencing: Sequencing in the Iyengar tradition has several dimensions. A class generally has a theme that moves from simple to complex asanas in the same category of asana. However, the emphasis is not on the performance of the asana, rather on the actions within each asana that relate from one asana to another. This deepens muscle memory and enables the body to go deeply in one direction. The sequence will then wind out and end with a neutral and balanced state. Sequences vary greatly depending on the student's ability, time of year and time of day.

Timings: Many asanas are held for several minutes. These may or may not be supported with props. Timings enable the student to cultivate awareness of the effect on the nervous system and on the mind, as well as to use the mind, breath and body to penetrate more deeply into the experience.

Props: Props may facilitate the experience of a pose for a new student or less capable body. Props enable the student to remain in asanas for longer periods with minimal effort, enhancing the effect of the pose. Props can encourage better alignment and sensitize the student to good form. A prop can become a teacher as it gives insight into proper form.

Women's adaptations: In Iyengar yoga we vary the practice during the different cycles of a woman's life. In the menstrual cycle, a woman may prefer an alternate and more calming practice. Prior to menses, the practice of inversions can help alleviate many uncomfortable menstrual symptoms.

Pre and post natal yoga are very particular and well developed practices in the Iyengar system. Different asanas are practiced depending on the trimester & health of the mother.

Many menopause symptoms can also be mitigated with regular practice, as yoga can have a strong effect on the hormonal cycles in the body.

Therapeutics: The application of Iyengar yoga to therapeutic conditions are many and diverse. Dr BKS Iyengar does not advocate a yoga practice while undergoing chemotherapy, but otherwise, sequences and asanas can be modified for many physical, internal, and systemic conditions.