

[IMAGE]

Mind-Body Wellness

By Staff Editorial

Yoga combines physical and mental discipline to achieve peace of mind and strength of body. Various branches of yoga utilize different physical postures or *asanas*; however, each branch has several elements in common. Perhaps the most important is the emphasis on the connection between the power of the mind and the body. Evidence suggests that when practiced consistently, yoga can tone and strengthen muscles, ease stress and even help fight addictions.

Smoking is one such addiction that seems to respond favorably to yoga. Kundalini yoga in particular is thought to benefit smokers in their battle to quit. Kundalini is one of the more vigorous forms of yoga. Strenuous and repetitive movements stretch people's limits. Particular attention to heavy breathing draws participants' focus straight to the lungs and their current health state.

The mind-body-spirit approach that yoga uses is becoming increasingly popular in addiction-recovery programs. Part of the addiction of smoking is associated with the mental comfort a cigarette provides. People who are addicted to just about any substance either have significant anxiety. In general, smoking is used to alleviate that anxiety.

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Yoga may help conquer other common addictions such as shopping, gambling and drinking. Yoga therapy also recognizes that the addiction may be a symptom of another, larger emotional problem. For example, alcoholism may develop as a mechanism for dealing with depression, and some people smoke to deal with insecurity.

By first realizing the larger spiritual or emotional problem underlying the addiction, the addict can better use the serene poses and quiet thoughtfulness of yoga to explore their mind and focus energy on quitting. Consistent meetings or classes that addicts can attend for yoga also help make them accountable for their path of healing, as well as providing a supportive community.

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