

Remember when you were a kid running around outdoors, exploring different places, climbing over obstacles, crawling through woodland, or just lying on your back in a field watching clouds float overhead?

You never had to think about whether or not you could physically do something, you just did it. Your body was a tool you used to put your thoughts and ideas into action. From your first awareness of movement you would bring your limbs into play to help explore surroundings, how things felt, what use they were, were they stable or wobbly, hard or soft, rough or smooth. All feedback was processed and built upon, there were no internal rules imposed on how you moved or used your body, those rules came from the outside.

Children play for many reasons, but one thing is sure, the enjoyment of movement helps them to explore, grow and develop their sense of identity and potential. Then school begins, work follows and the pressures of modern life impose themselves both mentally and physically. As we move through life the game changes, we are restricted by clothes, shoes, chairs, cars, desks, queues, political correctness, colleagues, relatives, friends, expectations. Our bodies become at best something we reward with a trip to the gym or a run round the block, and at worst something we drag in front of the mirror to bemoan its lack of shape or stamina. The need for a quick fix or cure all is currently driving a multi billion pound industry of self help, diet, and positive thinking books, television programmes, magazines, none of which seem to be doing too great a job.

Whatever happened to doing



stretching, the truth

trisha hills believes yoga can help every body deal with the stresses of modern life. bob, being stiffer than hell, is all ears. text by trisha hills, dip bwy

something just because it feels good, to allowing a journey of exploration to take place, to go back to the simple joy a young child feels when they realise they can crawl or walk or skip. The beauty of yoga is that it can invoke such a feeling. When approached with an open mind and a willingness to explore what is happening within our own body, yoga encourages us to open up mentally as well as physically. Yoga isn't a sport, it is certainly a means of improving your health but you are not playing against anyone else, there is no measuring up to another's ability or competing to be the best.

Our bodies are wonderful complicated structures, they are team players, and each part has a role in supporting another. A stiff and aching back will have an impact on how we feel mentally, migraine can leave us

unable to move, exciting news will inspire us to leap up or run around, sad news will collapse our spirit. One certainty is that the body as well as the mind has a need to move back to balance, which is the part that yoga can play. Yoga is much more than making a shape, it is about discovering our holding patterns, experiencing the cathartic feeling of moving through and out the other side of restriction, liberating our thoughts and actions from the ingrained habits that we assumed were our lot. It is a journey of exploration, playing our edge, realizing a potential we didn't know existed, growing in confidence.

As the body becomes less constrained so do our minds, we learn to respond to situations not react, we learn that time can be on our side, we can pause before we make a decision, tap into our gut feeling, our inner

instinct for what is truly right or wrong. We begin to find the strength to make decisions for ourselves, trusting our knowledge and self worth to guide our lives along a path of balance and liberation.

How does all of this happen? The answer to that question is within you, it is for you to explore and find internal focus. It is a journey from which you can only benefit, whether you devote two hours a week or an hour a day, moving the body back to its natural balance will bring rewards. Find a teacher you feel a connection with, a class that feels supportive, or a DVD aimed at the beginner and begin! Remember it isn't serious, it isn't competitive, it isn't intimidating – it is simply the tool you need to reconnect with your inner child to find the sense of fun and discovery that is within us all.