

Clear Minds & Happy Hearts Through Kundalini Yoga

By Samantha Durbin

Trying to summarize Kundalini yoga is tough for me. Let me just say this: in the two years I've practiced Kundalini, I have been more grounded, more creative, and insightfully in touch with who I am—my authentic self. Kundalini is exercise for not just your body, but your mind and heart as well. Vinyasa, Hatha, Bikram, acro, power, restorative—of all the kinds of yoga I have tried, nothing has tapped into my spirituality like Kundalini.

Because this yoga is best experienced for yourself, my current guru, Liya Garber, who teaches at [The Yoga Tree](#) in Berkeley, will help me explain it. Liya has been teaching Kundalini for four years, practicing for six. She is certified in both Hatha and Kundalini yoga and is registered with the KRI (Kundalini Research Institute). Her teaching style is unique in that when she's taking you through many Kriya, a series of postures, breath, and sound, she explains what it means in an easy to understand, fascinating way. She's also a fan of freestyle dancing in class and never skimps on the gong sound bath in Savasana.

Let's begin with some Kundalini 101.

With Kundalini you have the ability to touch base with your subconsciousness through a physical, mental and emotional practice. You can also gain insight about stored belief systems, emotions, thoughts, stories, and traumas your mind isn't necessarily aware of. When I practice, I can tap into those areas and find more awareness. When I start to feel something rise during practice, then I can identify what it is that I want to work on, then I start working on it.

So it's kind of like therapy?

I still go to therapists, healers, or oracles when I need to. Kundalini is more like maintaining my clear mind. I believe the connection between the mind and the heart is self-initiated. I initiative myself to be my own healer and intuitive. Kundalini activates all five senses—water, air, fire, earth, ether—which is what we're made of. When you activate these and create balance inside you, then you start to create that energy around you to magnetize what you need. It's not just what you want, it's what you need, too.

So when I do my daily morning practice, I start to cultivate that momentum in my life. Kundalini energy is everything. When I focus my energy and direct it to the most important thing in my life, it's my connection to source—my connection to my soul. The most important connection we have in this life is with our soul. When someone feels lost, there's no

connection with the soul. You can create a connection with your soul by having a deeper relationship with the breath, the mind, and the body.

Why is meditation an important part of Kundalini?

Kundalini and the teachings of [Yogi Bhaajan](#), (the enlightened teacher from India who introduced Kundalini teachings to America), starts with working on your internal chant. What is your internal mantra? What are you saying to yourself all day long? Meditation is very nice on the yoga mat, but we can take the meditation and have it all day when we are aware of our inner self-talk. In a Kundalini class we focus on the manta, Sat Nam, a lot.

What does Sat Nam mean?

The language in Kundalini is Gurmukhi, a sacred Indian language. Sat Nam essentially means, "I am vibrating my true essence." My universal truth. Every person has their interpretation, but Sat Nam comes from the words for the five elements we are made of. When we start to vibrate Sat Nam, it helps to balance the five elements in the body. And you're reminding yourself, again and again, to come back to source—to come home. Ultimately, we all want to be authentic.

It's empowering because sometimes we're trying to be who someone else wants us to be and when you vibrate your truth it starts to rise. What are we here for? How do we connect to our purpose? Each one of us has a mission. Sat Nam helps the mind wake up to that energy of authenticity and balance of the elements in the body.

And there are so many other mantras people can use in Kundalini too. How do mantras work?

The mind will start to have a new projection because you're giving your mind new words to focus on. The feeling of a whole Kundalini class becoming one extended meditation is because with the breath and the movement there's a mantra playing internally all the time and it gets into your brain. Then your brain starts vibrating those mantras. They help to start higher awareness, higher consciousness or presence, more self-love, and more radiance. The mind is no longer vibrating negative self-talk like, "I hate myself" or "I'm not good enough," if you practice Sat Nam and other positive mantras throughout the day.

Why is a daily spiritual practice beneficial?

When we do Kundalini yoga, especially a daily practice, we are polishing the whole brain. We need to have an outlet for clearing the brain, to clear stress and the abundance of

information we get from places like social media. In class, it's really empowering through the mantras and the breath, and you start to have an outlet for that information to leave our psyche. Then the psyche can have more space for creativity and love! Which is very healing. Depression starts to disappear when you don't focus on what's going on outside. In daily practice, I go inside, where it's healing and warm. Where it's home.

What can someone expect when they start practicing Kundalini?

Each one of us has a difference experience. When people are in class, they feel the high of a group consciousness—this feels really good and safe. And then they leave and do their own thing. We live in a city and the Western world, and you can feel very triggered after. And that feeling or emotion that gets triggered is what you're releasing. Sometimes during the exercises you get physical sensations like tingling, numbing, or rushes of energy or a big rush of energy. You can have a happy high feeling or a sense of not being grounded. Sometimes you're just happy and relaxed, or sometimes very emotional.

After a good night's sleep is when you feel the best. It's like taking a flight. When you're between two countries, you feel bloated or tired on the flight. You're having a shift in your consciousness, and the mind and the body have nowhere to land yet. Sometimes it takes some time to get there—to get home.

What do you recommend doing after an intense Kundalini class?

Making yourself a safe space where you can just be yourself, like dinner with a girlfriend or nature time. Going home to partners I can find hard; sometimes my emotions will explode at my partner. It's nice after to eat a healthy meal, take care of ourselves and have some space.

What are some tips for managing wellness in this time and year in particular?

We are in the Aquarian Age, a time when humanity is moving into self-empowerment, moving into a place of the heart center. We need to find who we are and connect to ourselves and our communities. Intuition and heart are two elements that humanity needs right now because then we don't have as much fear of what's happening on the planet, from climate change to a new government. A lot of people are suffering from depression and lack of motivation because there's so much going on. The more intuition and heart center we have, the more respect and happiness we have for other people.

Also, you want to focus on physical movement because we sit all the time. In class, we focus on dancing, shaking, breath of fire and clearing of the glands. Also, moments of

chanting, coming into the devotion of the heart. By finding a collective voice together, we can imagine where humanity is going. Everything comes from the imagination, so if the glands (pituitary, pineal, thyroid) are activated, and all of the body is working, it's more pranic energy for visualization. And when the heart is activated, visualization is for the highest good for the next generations.