

## What is Kundalini Yoga?

By Selah Martha, MA

Many of you know me as a body-centered therapist. The purpose of my practice is to awaken embodied consciousness as a natural source of healing. I hold space for work of depth and power, and I witness many layers of release in the body and psyche as healing happens. To support this level of work, I need my own disciplines to keep myself clear. One of these is Kundalini yoga.

I recently completed the 3HO Teacher Training offered by Yoga West in Vancouver, and with this beautiful teaching so vivid in my heart, I decided to use this space to tell you more about it. My local teacher Emmy Graham (Harjas Kaur) has been teaching Kundalini yoga in Port Townsend since 2005 and has been my inspiration, with her committed and powerful practice. I am grateful to the 3HO community and especially to Yogi Bhajan for their great love in making this yoga available to the world.

So, what is Kundalini yoga? When the Kundalini rises doesn't it make people see visions and go off the rails? Is it a sexual yoga? Does it turn you into a turban-topped yogi meditating on a bed of nails?

Kundalini yoga, as taught by Yogi Bhajan, is quite simply a reliable technology for human happiness. Yogi Bhajan broke with his own yogic lineage which said that kundalini yoga was a secret technology which could only be handed down through a teacher / initiate process. He calls for people to self-initiate and live as spiritual beings in a human experience.

One way or another, this human life demands work. If you put the work into the psycho-physical skill of aligning with the Infinite, you build a strong bridge for the flow of clear, loving energy. It is this flow which creates happiness. My Vancouver teacher Guru Raj Kaur says that the risen Kundalini is not characterized by visions and fireworks, but by a feeling of being normal in an elevated, effective state.

There are 22 recognized forms of yoga, with about a dozen practiced widely today. Each school has its own emphasis on basic components of yogic practice, such as exercise, mantra, meditation, and breath control. You will often hear the term "the eight limbs of yoga", a term which describes the need to develop the entire spectrum of the body and mind as an integrated system in order to experience union. The eight limbs are:

Awakening and absorption in spirit

Deep meditation

One-pointed concentration

Synchronization of senses and thoughts

Control of prana (life force)

Postures for health and meditation

Five disciplines for relation to the Self

Five restraints for integrity in interactions

Kundalini yoga is a Raj yoga, one which includes all of the eight limbs in each exercise set, or *kriya*. For instance, whereas some yogas emphasize stretching and muscle strength, Kundalini yoga is a dynamic of movement, sound and breath which creates a vibration. It is this vibratory shift which strengthens every aspect of being simultaneously; hence it is a fast-acting yoga.

In the physical body, the technology works much like acupuncture, but without an external activator like needles. The vibration activates specific centers in the body to strengthen the nervous and glandular systems. There is a great need today for support for our nervous systems, which are often overloaded or misfiring in the attempt to keep up with the flow of life.

Endocrine glands are the guardians of health, but they need full fluid circulation to get their products into the blood. Kundalini yoga increases circulation of all fluids, massages the glands, and helps them communicate with each other. Rhythmical breathing, synchronized with sound and mantra, stimulates the hypothalamus, the pineal and pituitary glands, and literally adjusts the endocrine function and the totality of the nervous system.

The physical body is one of ten bodies: Soul, Protective Mind, Projective Mind, Meditative Mind, Physical, Arcline, Aura, Pranic, Subtle, and Radiant. Life-giving change on behalf of any of these bodies reverberates through all the others. This resonance and connectivity is what we call good health. Kundalini yoga directly activates and balances each of the Ten Bodies, and all of the eight chakras, changing our thoughts, reactions and behaviors. It is also a powerful tool for affecting the relationship between the conscious and the subconscious.

This last aspect comes into play in a big way in therapy, where we look at how subconscious patterns are causing chronic problems in our daily lives. Effective therapy rests on the client-therapist team being able to identify the way a problem is held in place at a nexus point of psychic and physical forces. As both people bring consciousness to that nexus, profound shifts can occur. The act of transforming one's own self-defeating material requires courage and strength. Kundalini yoga is a major resource in this constant practice.

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### **Kundalini Yoga Classes in Port Townsend:**

Mondays 5:30-7:00pm Annapurna Inn 538 Adams St  
Thursdays 9-10:30am Room to Move Yoga 1008 Lawrence St