

yoga

JOURNAL

Yoga Before or After Weight Loss?

I am 48 years old, 80 pounds overweight, and new to this whole thing. I always wanted to begin yoga, but friends say I should forget it until I lose weight. Is this true? —*Rita*

Read Natasha's reply:

Dear Rita,



Absolutely not! True, carrying extra weight will make certain poses more challenging, and there will be increased pressure on the joints in some poses. But not doing yoga until you lose weight is like not doing yoga until you get flexible. Among other things, we do yoga because of the tremendous physical and mental benefits it brings us in exactly those areas where we struggle. If we were already as strong and flexible and thin as we tell ourselves we should be, then we wouldn't have to do an asana practice at all. We could just sit around meditating all day until we found bliss.

The point is that yoga helps us find balance in all areas of our lives; we're not supposed to arrive in yoga class as a fait accompli. We're supposed to show up ready to take a journey of transformation, whatever that may be. Everyone comes to the mat with a different imbalance, but everyone is working on something, and it is the act of getting on the mat that points us in the right direction.

A dear friend of mine began practicing yoga at the age of 37. She had always avoided it because she thought she was too stiff and that she didn't have a "yoga body." After several months of classes, she made a remark that I have never forgotten. She said that on the days she does yoga, she consistently makes better food choices, and these choices come naturally because she is calmer, more centered, and more fully in the present moment.

To me, this observation is the essence of the impact that yoga can have in all areas of our lives. I encourage you to disregard your friends' advice and find a class that lets you begin to experience yoga's extraordinary potential. You may need to experiment a

bit to find the class that is just right for you, but I am sure it will be worth it.

Return to <http://www.yogajournal.com/basics/2>