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LIFESTYLE

Puff piece

SMOKERS MAY GET

fewer hours of sleep and have less restful slumber than non-smokers, according to a German study. The findings cannot prove that smoking directly impairs sleep, since smokers may have other habits that could affect their shut-eye. But there is reason to believe the stimulating effects of nicotine may be to blame. *Reuters*

'Can do' attitude key to good health

A "CAN DO" attitude can work wonders for your health and outlook on life but those who have a greater faith in 'luck' or 'fate' are more likely to live an unhealthy life, says an Australian study.

Researchers from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research analysed data on the diet, exercise and personality type of more than 7,000 people. Those who believe in scripting their own lives ate healthier food, exercised more, smoked less and avoided binge drinking, the findings demonstrated, according to a Melbourne statement.

Deborah Cobb-Clark, professor at the Melbourne Institute, said those who have a greater faith in 'luck'



or 'fate' are more likely to live an unhealthy life. "Our research shows a direct link between the type of personality a person has and a healthy lifestyle," she said. "The main policy response to the obesity epidemic has been the provision of better

information, but information alone is insufficient to change people's eating habits," she said. "Understanding the psychological underpinning of a person's eating patterns and exercise habits is central to understanding obesity," she said. *IANS*

Y
YOGA

Downward Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)

Adho Mukha Svanasana is both an inversion and an arm balance. It is the resting point in the Vinyasa sequence and serves as a barometer for the stretch at the backs of the legs as well as the shoulders. Flexing the hips and straightening the knees focuses the stretch on the hamstrings. Straightening the arms to press the body back toward the legs indirectly deepens the stretch.

TECHNIQUES

- Get down on your hands and knees. Stretch the elbows and relax the upper back between the shoulder blades, which gives you the feeling that the arms blend into the shoulder blades.
- Exhale and lift your knees and draw your back backwards from the pelvis, so that your arms and back form one line.
- Stretch your legs in such a way that you get the feeling that someone behind you is pulling your legs and hips backwards from the top of



your upper legs.

- When you have placed your back and your legs correctly, stretch out your arms. These result in a stretching from two sides of the back: a stretching from the pelvis and a stretching from the arms. When the back and the chest are placed correctly, you will notice that you can quietly breathe in and out through the belly. You should not let your chest hang downwards or make your back extremely sunken. In this Asana, the back should be lengthened along its entire

length.

BENEFITS

- Stretches and strengthens the whole body.
- Stronger hands, wrists, low-back, hamstrings, calves and Achilles tendon.
- Decreases back pain by strengthening the entire back and shoulder girdle.
- Elongated shoulders and shoulder blade area.
- Decrease in tension and headaches by elongating the cervical spine and neck and relaxing the head.

CAUTION

- Do not practice this yoga posture if you have carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Avoid this posture in late-term pregnancy.
- If you are suffering from a recent or chronic injury to the back, hips, arms or shoulders do not attempt this yoga posture.
- Always check with your doctor if you have any doubts or concerns regarding the suitability of this pose for you.

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ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Rediscover Yourself

THE SCIENCE OF YOGA was not invented with weight loss in mind. It was created to help people achieve union of the mind and the body. The word yoga in Sanskrit language means, "to unite" or "to harness". If you go to the root meaning of the word, it actually refers to harnessing the inner energies to achieve the balance of the mind, body and soul. Once the three are in perfect harmony, spiritual aspirations can be developed and practice of meditation becomes a way of life.

In many years of travelling around the world I have come across various interpretations of yoga. Once during a stroll in Manhattan, I came across several yoga studios with unique descriptions - 'Hot Yoga', 'Light Yoga', 'Kundalini Yoga'... The list was endless. Many new age gurus have claimed to create new postures or breathing techniques. However upon more careful observation I have come to the conclusion that all the new interpretations are modifications of the old techniques. So why has yoga become so popular and widespread these days? The answer is simple. The gentle moves and delicate postures are easy to follow at home, you don't need any exercise equipment and the benefits are immediate.

I myself have dabbled in yoga on and off over the years, to reach only one conclusion that it really works! I have attended different classes, met many teachers but in all honesty I benefited the most when I took time off from work and decided to do a week long yoga retreat with a young practitioner from India named Vishnu. Unlike other famous teachers or gurus I had interacted with, he was from a small village in India and was very young. Within three days of doing sessions with him I was more flexible, at peace with myself and was sleeping better. His ability to use his body instead of a rope to help his students be more flexible was something I had never encountered before. That one week of yoga retreat in Qatar changed my life forever. I now follow the moves taught by him everyday in the comfort of my home and am slowly getting better at it.

Like any other form of exercise, yoga is most effective when practiced regularly. The variety of breathing techniques, and simple but effective postures will help you get started on a journey that will eventually help you to eliminate stress and live a well-balanced life. So look for a yoga class near you to experience the magic, and rediscover yourself.

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