

Introduction to Yoga



مجلس الثقافة السعودي

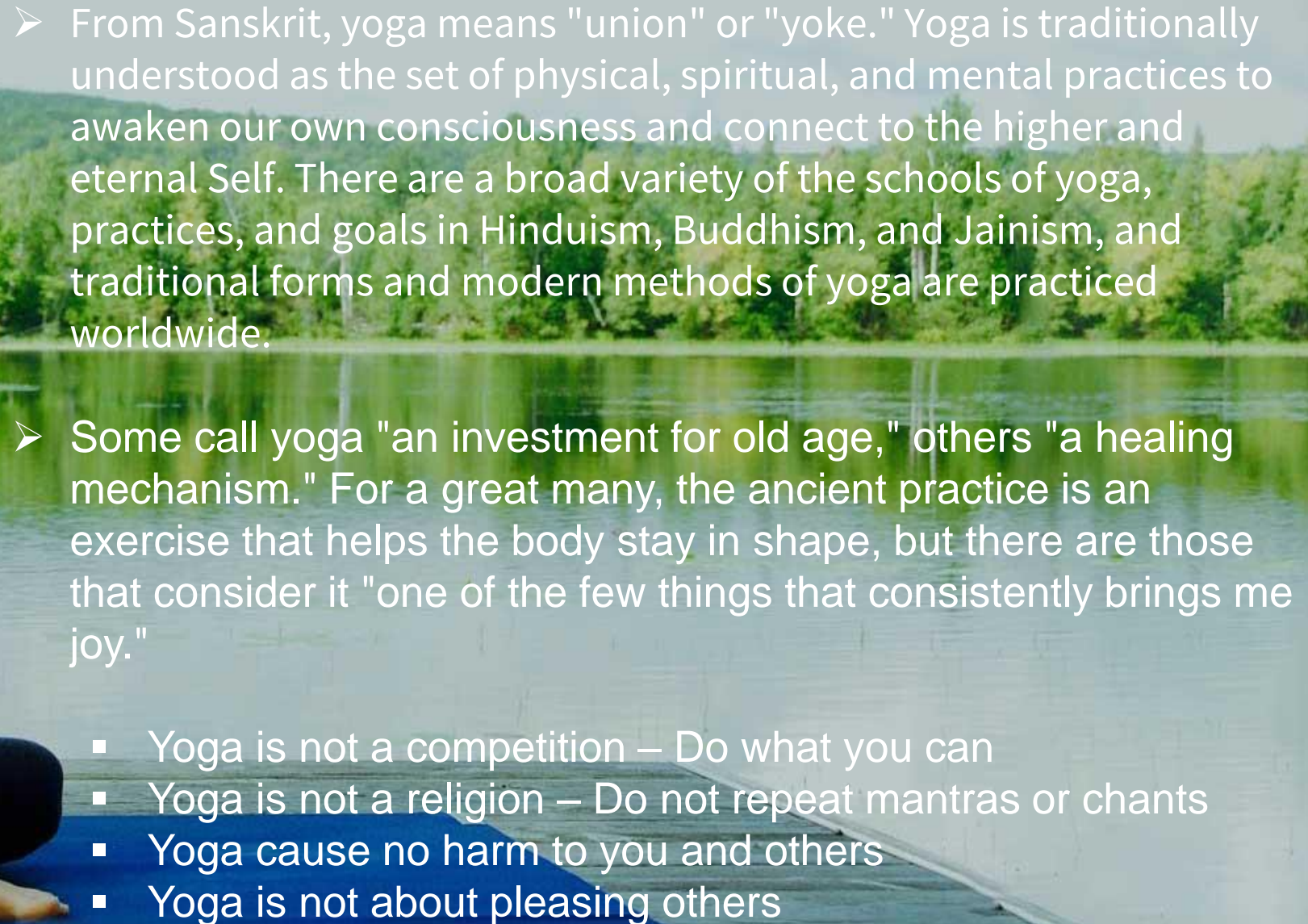




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What is Yoga?

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- From Sanskrit, yoga means "union" or "yoke." Yoga is traditionally understood as the set of physical, spiritual, and mental practices to awaken our own consciousness and connect to the higher and eternal Self. There are a broad variety of the schools of yoga, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and traditional forms and modern methods of yoga are practiced worldwide.
 - Some call yoga "an investment for old age," others "a healing mechanism." For a great many, the ancient practice is an exercise that helps the body stay in shape, but there are those that consider it "one of the few things that consistently brings me joy."
 - Yoga is not a competition – Do what you can
 - Yoga is not a religion – Do not repeat mantras or chants
 - Yoga cause no harm to you and others
 - Yoga is not about pleasing others

Yoga Elements

- Asanas - poses
- Vinyasas - flows
- Pranayama - breath

➤ The number of asanas used in yoga as exercise has increased rapidly from a nominal 84 in 1830.

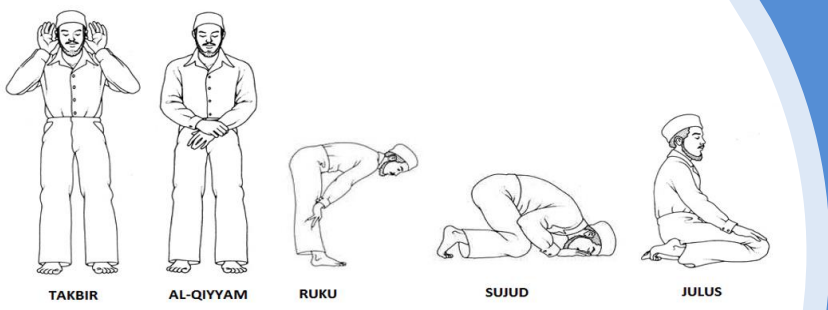


Statue of Shiva performing yogic meditation in Padmasana

Yoga History

- The beginnings of Yoga were developed by the Indus-Sarasvati civilization in Northern India over 5,000 years ago.
- The Classical period is defined by Patanjali's Yoga-Sotras in 196 manuals, the first systematic presentation of yoga. Written some time in the second century. It was named Raja yoga.
- Post Classical Yoga Tantra with radical techniques to cleanse the body and mind to break the knots that bind us to our physical existence.
- Modern period in the late 1800 and early 1900, yoga masters start traveling to the west attracting attention and followers.
- The first Hindu teacher to actively advocate and disseminate aspects of yoga, not including asanas, to a western audience, Swami Vivekananda, toured Europe and the United States in the 1890s.





Islam and Yoga

- In the early 11th century, the Persian scholar Al Biruni visited India, lived with Hindus for 16 years, and with their help translated several significant Sanskrit works into Arabic and Persian languages. Al Biruni's version of Yoga Sutras reached Persia and Arabian peninsula by about 1050 AD.
- Yoga is not accepted by mainstream Islam. Minority Islamic sects such as the mystic Sufi movement, particularly in South Asia, adopted Indian yoga practices, including postures.
- Malaysia's in 2008, and Indonesian in 2009 and Ali Gommaa in 2004 passed a fatwa, prohibiting Muslims from practicing yoga. However, it was clarified that yoga as physical exercise is permissible, but the chanting of religious mantras is prohibited.



Yoga Benefits

The ultimate goal of Yoga is stilling the mind and gaining insight, resting in detached awareness

Physical body

- Balance
- Flexibility
- Mobility
- Stamina and strength.

Mental health

- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Offers relaxation
- Improves mood
- Helps with depression.

Spiritual side

- Cultivates wholeness
- Promotes self-control
- Teaches acceptance, love, and compassion towards yourself and others



United Nations General Assembly
International Day of Yoga

Types of Yoga

Hatha

When searching for yoga classes, Hatha is probably the word you'll encounter most often. That's because it's used as an umbrella term for any yoga practice rooted in physical postures (asanas) and breathing techniques (pranayama). Most of the yoga styles nowadays can be classified under Hatha category.

Vinyasa

Just like Hatha, Vinyasa yoga is a general term used for a flow-style yoga (or a part of the class). The poses smoothly transition from one into another and are synchronized with the breath. Vinyasa means "joining or linking mechanism." The suffix 'nyasa' means "to place in a mindful way."

Ashtanga – Yoga of the Eight Limbs

Want to challenge your body and mind? Ashtanga is all you need. It's physically demanding, helps build strength, stamina, plus flexibility. Every class has the same structure and follows the exact same series of postures – even if you change the studio or instructor.



1. **Yama:** Correct behavior toward others.

Nonviolence, Truthfulness, Not stealing, Not wasting energy, Abstaining from greed

2. **Niyama:** The principles by which you should live your own life

Purity, Contentment, Spiritual observances, Study, Devotion

3. **Asana:** The seat of consciousness; the yogi's seat and postures to prepare the body.

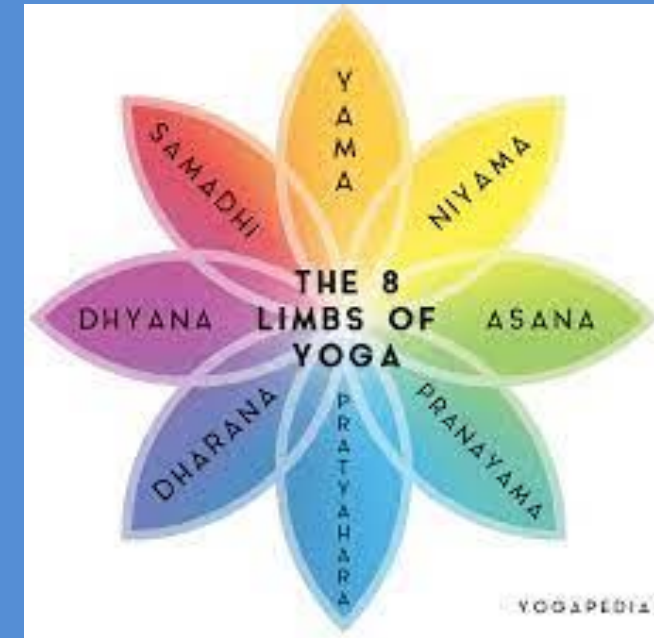
4. **Pranayama:** Expanding the life force through breathing exercises.

5. **Pratyahara:** Turning the senses inward to explore the inner universe.

6. **Dharana:** Effortless focused attention; training the mind to meditate.

7. **Dhyana:** A continuous flow, meditation perfected.

8. **Samadhi:** Lost or found in the Divine; unity.



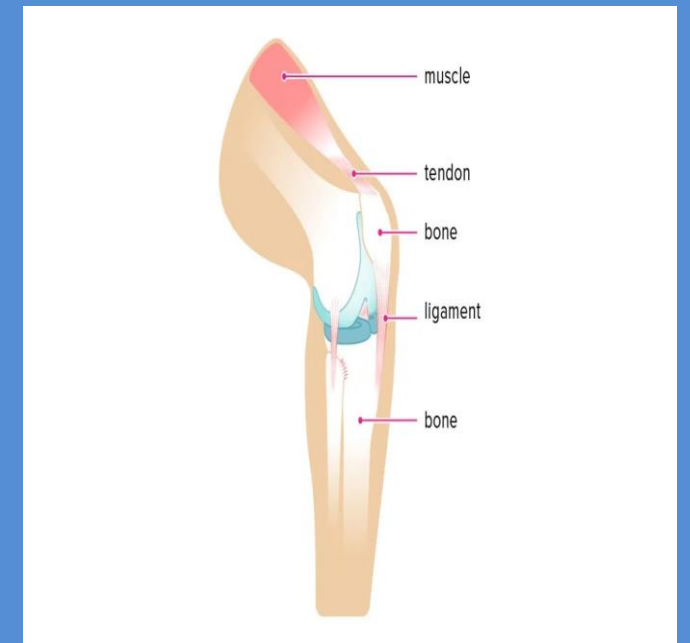
Hot Yoga

Hot yoga is precisely how it sounds like – hot. It is practiced in a heated room with an average temperature of 85 to 100° F and high humidity. Hot yoga is challenging and helps build muscle tone, improve endurance, and take your flexibility to the next level. Prepare to wear as little clothes as possible and sweat buckets.

Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga is your go-to style if you're dreaming about splits want to release stress, and calm the mind. Most of the poses are practiced seated or supine and are held for as long as 5 minutes - longer holds allow the body to relax and stretch deep connective tissues.

Yin Yoga effect is deeper than muscles, as stretching can change the water content of these muscles, ligaments, and tendons to make them more elastic. Over time regular stretching stimulus stem cells which then differentiate into new muscle tissue and other cells that generate elastic collagen.



Power Yoga

Power yoga is an active and athletic, Western style of yoga, created simultaneously by American yoga teachers Beryl Bender Birch and Bryan Kest in the 1980s. Power yoga classes move quickly through the poses and each pose is held for only three to five breaths

Power yoga does not follow a set series of poses and may vary greatly depending on the teacher. The commonality between various Power yoga classes is their emphasis on building strength and endurance

Other names for Yoga include Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Laya Yoga and Hatha Yoga.



Buddha in seated meditation with the (meditation mudra), Gal Vihara, Sri Lanka

Yoga VS Other Fitness Routines

There are three main components you need for a well-rounded exercise program: strength, flexibility, and cardio. Thanks to so many styles of yoga and modern yoga-fitness hybrids, you can easily vary your weekly yoga schedule to hit all of the mentioned cornerstones.

Another great thing is that you can combine yoga with any other types of exercise. It's good for runners, weightlifters, swimmers and virtually any kind of sportspersons (or couch potatoes).

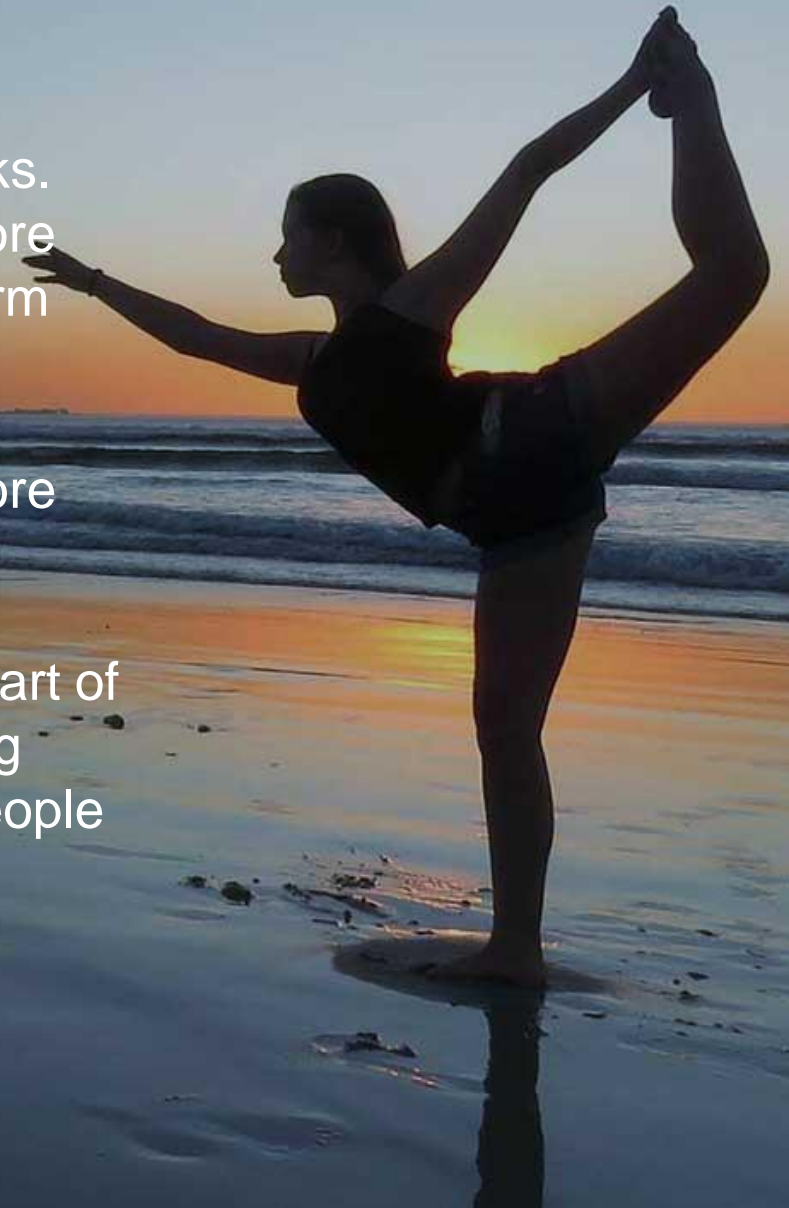


How Often To Practice Yoga

Yoga is not a quick fix. You won't get a 'killer body' after two weeks. Even if you practice every day. Even if you sweat on your mat more than one hour a day. In fact, quick fixes never work in the long term and often leave you disillusioned and unmotivated.

Commitment is the key. Consistent yoga practice will bring far more benefits and faster results than sporadic workouts.

Yoga happens off the mat too. Doing physical postures is just a part of the journey. Calming yourself with yogic breath at work, redefining your attitude to food, choosing to be kinder to yourself and the people around you – these things to can practice every day!



Yoga Breathing

What makes yoga different from simple stretching or gymnastics is the focus on the correct breath - breathing and asanas always go hand in hand. Why is it so important?

In yoga, there's an ancient concept called prana – a vital life force. This subtle energy is the foundation of life and is all around us, permeating all living and non-living objects. It is believed that prana controls our vitality, every physical action and movement as well as the clarity of mind and consciousness.

According to yogic philosophy, prana flows in and out of our body with breath, nurturing every cell. The blockages in our bodies prevent the free circulation of prana and might result in physical diseases and emotional issues.

Yoga Breathing

Exercise 1:

Closing one nostril; Inhale with one nostril and exhale with the other. Sama Vritti pranayama indicates that both the inhale and exhale are of equal duration.

- Come to sit in a comfortable position, close the eyes.
- Use thumb of right hand to control right nostril and ring finger to control left nostril.
- Fold first and middle fingers into palm of right hand, or touch to forehead.
- Inhale through left nostril.
- Exhale through right nostril.
- Inhale through right nostril
- Exhale through left nostril.



Yoga Breathing

The easiest technique commonly used in yoga is **Dirga (or Deerga) Swasam Pranayama**. Also known as the three-part yogic breath, this technique calms the mind, brings awareness to the present, and nourishes the entire body.

Exercise 2 : Three-Part Yogic Breath

The three-part yogic breath involves the abdomen, diaphragm, and chest and engages three lobes of the lungs. You can practice it anywhere whenever you need to release tension and wind down



Yoga Breathing

1. Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position with your spine long and shoulders relaxed. Soften your face and root both sitting bones into the ground. If you find it hard to keep a straight spine, you can lie down on your back, extend your legs and relax your body.
2. Focus on your breathing pattern, observing inhales and exhales. Let go of your thoughts. Whenever you get carried away, bring your attention back to the breath.
3. Place your hand on the abdomen. Inhale through the nose and expand your belly like a balloon. Exhale through the nose and draw the navel back to the spine. Repeat for at least five breaths.
4. Move your hand higher to the ribcage. On the next inhale, feel your belly filling up with air and expanding along with the ribcage. Let the air out from the ribcage and belly on the exhale. Repeat for at least five breaths.
5. Place your hand on the upper chest, just below the collarbone. Inhale and feel your belly, ribcage, and chest rise and expand. Breathe out from the upper chest, ribcage, and belly. Repeat for at least five breaths.

The Power of OMM

In a yoga setting, the chanting of om at the beginning of class ushers practitioners into the time and space that is about to be spent on the mat or in meditation. Likewise, an om at the end of class signifies that your physical practice has ended and it is time to re enter society.

Omm seeds syllable used as a building block for many other mantras during meditation. For example, om namah shivaya means "I honor the divinity within myself." Om shanti means "peace be with you" and is an alternative to saying goodbye.

Chanting with a group of people also serves to unify the group and create a sense of community. As you feel the vibration of the chant and lose the sound of your own voice among those of your classmates, it's possible to feel at one with other people and even with the universe.



A woman with blonde hair tied back is sitting in a meditative pose on a blue yoga mat. She is wearing a white sports bra and black leggings. Her eyes are closed, and she has a calm expression. The background features a light-colored wall and a brick wall on the right side. The floor is made of light wood.

Basic Yoga Poses For Beginners

Child's Pose/Balāsana

Balāsana is my personal favorite among the many yoga poses. It feels amazing first thing in the morning (better than morning coffee, believe me) and relaxing after a long day. You can open your practice with Balāsana, catch your breath in it during some brutal power yoga flow and wind down if you have no time for Savāsana at the end of the class.



Downward Facing Dog Pose/Adho Mukha Svanāsana

Downward Facing Dog is the most recognizable yoga poses that you'll encounter in any classroom. It brings the best of two worlds – strengthening and stretching your whole body. There's a lot going on in the pose, but don't get frustrated. After getting the alignment right for a few times, your body will naturally learn to take the correct form.



Plank/Kumbhakasana

Kumbhakasana is not unique to yoga. Mostly referred to as Plank Pose, Kumbhakasana is a great strengthening exercise that builds heat, boosts energy and prepares your body for more challenging arm balances.



Standing Forward Bend/Uttanasana

Standing Forward Bend is one of my go-to poses after sitting all day. It stretches the entire backside of the body and muscles along the spine as well as releases tension from the neck, shoulders, and hips. While it sure feels like a stretch, Standing Forward Bend is restorative and relaxing. Dropping your head below the heart increases blood flow to the brain, calming the mind and combating fatigue.



Mountain Pose/Tadasana

The Mountain pose is the foundation of all the standing asanas. Though it doesn't look like much on the outside, Tadasana is a dynamic pose. It helps draw attention to your posture and breath, bringing a variety of physical and mental benefits.



Corpse Pose/Savasana

Do it in the evening to relax and let go of the passing day. Do it in the morning to invite stillness and peace into your scheduled tasks. Do Savasana anywhere and anytime you like. Because practicing awareness and learning to stay conscious here and now is the key to a healthy life.



Sun Salutation – Surya Namskar

- A practice in yoga as exercise incorporating a flow sequence of some twelve gracefully linked asanas
- The basic sequence involves moving from a standing position into Downward and Upward Dog poses and then back to the standing position, but many variations are possible. The set of 12 asanas is dedicated to the Hindu solar deity Surya.
- In Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, there are two Sun Salutation sequences, types A and B



If you interested come join us every Tuesday at 7 PM using the following Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4909294669?pwd=T0dSanhFTXV0V2FJMTE0SDNPZTZLUT09>

THANK YOU
Namesta

