A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is sitting on a purple yoga mat on a dark wood floor. She is wearing a white long-sleeved cardigan over a light-colored top and dark purple leggings. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a large green plant in a woven basket, several lit candles on wooden holders, and a wall-mounted light fixture.

Yoga with Confidence

How to Begin, Belong, and
Build a Practice that Lasts

By Leslie Nelson

Yoga with Confidence

How to Begin, Belong, and Build a Practice
that Lasts

By Leslie Nelson, BS Nursing, ERYT-200, RYT-500

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A Note from the Author

If you are holding this booklet, there's a good chance something inside you is curious about yoga. Maybe you feel excited. Maybe you feel unsure. Maybe you've told yourself you're not flexible enough, strong enough, calm enough, or experienced enough.

I want to begin by gently telling you — none of that matters.

Yoga is not something you have to earn. It is not a performance. It is not reserved for a certain body type, age, personality, or level of fitness. It is simply a practice of paying attention. Of breathing. Of showing up exactly as you are.

When I first began practicing, I didn't know the language. I didn't understand the cues. I wondered if I was doing it "right." Over time, I realized something important: yoga isn't about getting it right. It's about getting present.

That is why I created this booklet.

I have watched so many new students walk into class carrying quiet uncertainty. They glance around the room. They try to follow along. They wonder what words like "engage," "root down," or "namasté" really mean. I have seen the visible shift that happens when understanding replaces confusion. Shoulders soften. Breathing deepens. Confidence grows.

My hope is that these pages help you feel prepared, informed, and at ease. I hope they remove the mystery and replace it with clarity. I hope they remind you that yoga is not about perfection — it is about practice.

Yoga meets you where you are on any given day. Some days you will feel strong. Some days you will feel tired. Some days your mind will be steady; other days it will wander. All of it is welcome. There is no gold star for doing it better than the person beside you. There is only the quiet reward of being present in your own body and breath.

If you take nothing else from this booklet, take this: you belong here.

You do not have to look a certain way. You do not have to move a certain way. You only have to begin.

With gratitude for your willingness to try,

Leslie

“Yoga is a journey of the self, to the self, through the self.” ~*Bhagavad Gita*

This means that yoga isn't about becoming someone new or fixing what's wrong.

It's about **remembering who you already are.**

Through the **body**, we build awareness.

Through the **breath**, we regulate the nervous system.

Through **attention and presence**, we reconnect to our inner steadiness.

The practice becomes a pathway inward—using the very tools we already carry within us—to return to clarity, balance, and wholeness.

Yoga meets you where you are and guides you back home.

Why Yoga?

*Understanding how yoga supports the body,
mind, and nervous system.*

Why Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient practice, originating in India over 5,000 years ago. Originally, yoga focused on discipline of the mind, breath, and ethics to achieve spiritual insight and liberation. The physical postures in modern yoga developed much later, building on the original foundation.

Yoga doesn't just feel good – it influences the nervous system and the brain.

Neuroscientists have studied yoga using brain scans and stress hormone testing, and they've found that regular practice helps shift the body out of **fight-or-flight** and into **rest-and-restore**.

When we move mindfully and breathe slowly, we stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which tells the brain that it's safe to relax. This is one reason many people leave a yoga class feeling calmer, clearer, and more balanced.

Over time, yoga has been shown to:

- **Calm the stress centers of the brain**
- **Strengthen focus, emotional balance, and resilience**
- **Lower cortisol (stress hormones)**
- **Improve sleep, mood, and pain perception**

From a neuroscience perspective, yoga helps the brain form healthier patterns—so instead of reacting automatically to stress, we gain more choice, awareness, and ease.

Every time you practice yoga, you're training your nervous system to recover more quickly, your mind to stay present, and your body to heal more efficiently.

That's why yoga isn't just exercise—it's **nervous system care**.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

*A simple introduction to the philosophy that
guides the practice of yoga.*

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

The physical practice of yoga is only one component of the holistic practice of yoga, and for that reason, yoga is life- changing. There are eight limbs of yoga and each becomes a part of your practice, through your instructor's guidance, and also in your independent practice.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga (Simple Guide)

1. **Yama** – How we treat others
Kindness, honesty, and respect.
2. **Niyama** – How we care for ourselves
Self-care, gratitude, and reflection.
3. **Asana** – Yoga postures
Building strength, flexibility, and ease in the body.
4. **Pranayama** – Breath awareness
Using the breath to calm and energize.
5. **Pratyahara** – Turning inward
Letting go of distractions.
6. **Dharana** – Focus
Training the mind to pay attention.
7. **Dhyana** – Meditation
Sustained, relaxed awareness.
8. **Samadhi** – Wholeness
Complete, connected, and fully present.

The key to a beautiful life is woven through the Eight Limbs –in how we move, how we breathe, how we focus, and how we live.

Choosing a Class

*An overview of common yoga styles to help you
find the class that fits you best.*

Choosing a Class

Yoga is truly for everybody; however, not all yoga classes are for everybody. I emphasize that you listen to your body, and adjust according to what your body needs and responds to. To give you an idea of where to begin, I've compiled a list of class descriptions with what it entails:

Restorative yoga is a slow, gentle style of yoga designed to help the body and nervous system deeply rest and reset.

In a restorative class, poses are fully supported with props like bolsters, blankets, and blocks so the body can relax without effort. Poses are held for several minutes, allowing muscles to soften, breathing to slow, and the mind to become calm.

Rather than stretching or strengthening, restorative yoga focuses on rest and recovery, nervous system regulation, stress relief, and deep relaxation and nervous system restoration.

Because the body is supported, restorative yoga is accessible to all levels, including beginners, people recovering from injury, or anyone feeling overwhelmed or fatigued.

Restorative yoga teaches the body how to rest — not by doing more, but by doing less.

It's especially helpful for reducing stress, improving sleep, calming anxiety, and restoring balance during busy or challenging seasons of life.

Yoga Nidra, often called *yogic sleep*, is a guided relaxation practice done lying down comfortably, with blankets and props for support. For beginners, Yoga Nidra is very simple: you don't move, stretch, or try to meditate. Instead, you're guided through gentle awareness of the breath, body, and calming imagery. The body rests deeply while the mind stays softly aware.

During Yoga Nidra:

- The nervous system shifts into deep relaxation
- Stress and mental tension release
- The body can rest more deeply than in normal sleep

It's normal to feel like you're between awake and asleep. There's no right or wrong experience — even if your mind wanders or you fall asleep, your body still benefits.

Yoga Nidra is a practice of effortless rest that helps the body recover and the mind reset.

It's especially helpful for beginners, people under stress, those with sleep difficulties, or anyone needing deep rest without physical effort.

Short Sample of a Yoga Nidra Script

“Allow your body to rest fully into the support beneath you. Feel the natural rhythm of your breath, steady and unforced. Notice the gentle rise of your chest as you inhale, and the soft release as you exhale. With each breath, allow your muscles to soften and your thoughts to drift without effort. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go. Simply rest in this quiet awareness, supported, safe, and at ease.”

A **Flow class** is a style of yoga where movements are linked together with the breath.

Even if you're holding one pose for a while, you maintain your focus on the breath, then move smoothly from one pose to the next, creating a gentle rhythm — like a moving meditation.

In a flow class:

- You'll inhale to open or lift, and exhale to fold or transition
- Poses are often repeated so you can learn the pattern
- You're encouraged to move at your own pace and rest whenever needed

Every flow class is different, but the goal isn't perfection — it's connection: connecting breath to movement, mind to body.

Flow yoga is about moving with awareness, listening to your body, and letting your breath guide you.

When **choosing your first flow class**, start with one labeled Gentle Flow or Slow Flow. As you become more comfortable and familiar with the practice, you can progress to classes such as Vinyasa or Power Flow, which are typically more challenging in both pace and intensity.

"Yoga is the movement of the mind toward stillness"

--T.K.V.Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga*

Each breath and each posture gently guides us there.

Chair yoga is a gentle and accessible style of yoga that uses a chair for support, making the practice safe and comfortable for all bodies and ability levels. Chair yoga helps improve mobility, strength and balance, reduce joint strain, increase circulation, and improve flexibility.

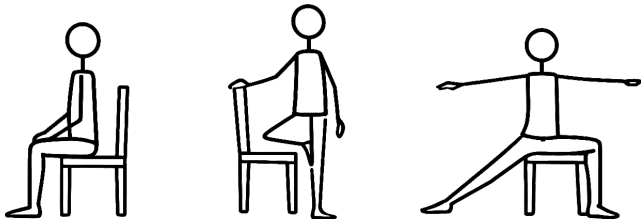
In a chair yoga class:

- Many poses are done seated, with feet grounded on the floor.
- Some poses may be done standing while holding the chair for balance.
- Movements are slow and mindful, coordinated with the breath.

You don't need to be flexible or get down on the floor.

Chair yoga brings the benefits of yoga – movement, breath, and awareness – into a supportive, approachable practice that meets you where you are.

It's ideal for beginners, seniors, people with injuries, or anyone wanting a gentle, confidence-building way to practice yoga.



Gentle yoga is a slow, accessible style of yoga focused on ease, comfort, and mindful movement rather than intensity or athletic effort. You might see a gentle class referred to as a Hatha yoga class, holding basic poses and focusing on breathing.

Classes typically include simple poses, slow transitions, and plenty of options for modification. Movements are done at a relaxed pace with an emphasis on breathing, body awareness, and safe alignment.

Gentle yoga is designed to:

- Improve mobility and flexibility
- Build confidence in movement
- Reduce stress and tension
- Support joint health and balance through postures that build strength

It's ideal for beginners, older adults, people returning after injury, or anyone wanting a calming practice without strain.

Gentle yoga helps you move your body with kindness and awareness — meeting yourself exactly where you are.

A **hybrid yoga class** blends traditional yoga with elements from another movement style—such as Pilates—into one cohesive class.

You'll get the mindfulness and flexibility of yoga combined with the strength and core work of the other discipline.

Benefits of a hybrid class:

- More strength focus than traditional yoga
- Improved core stability
- Balanced flexibility + muscle tone
- Great for students who want variety without high impact. These types of classes vary in intensity, so when choosing a class of this kind, read in the description of what the class entails, and if modifications are provided as a beginner.

Some other genres of yoga include

- **Ashtanga**—A strong, athletic style with a set sequence of poses done in the same order every time.
- **Kundalini**—Focuses on breathwork, chanting, repetitive movements, and meditation to awaken energy.
- **Yin**—Long held stretches (3-5 minutes) that target deep connective tissues.
- **Hot 26 Poses**— Sometimes referred to as Bikram yoga, as a series of the same 26 poses practiced in the same order in a hot, sauna like atmosphere.

First Time Visiting a Yoga Studio?

What to expect when attending a yoga class for the first time.

First time visiting a studio? Here's what you need to know.

Yoga is meant to be comfortable and approachable. You don't need special clothing or expensive equipment to begin. Wear clothing that allows you to move freely while staying in place when bending or stretching so you can feel comfortable throughout your practice. Clothing that is too loose, especially oversized, can sometimes become a distraction and get in the way of movement. A bottle of water and a small towel to blot perspiration may be beneficial to bring along to your first class.

Most yoga studios are generally operated in the same format. When you enter a studio for the first time, you will most likely see a reception desk to check in. Most studios have gone to online booking, but accept walk-ins. Either way, you will probably be asked to fill out an intake form and waiver to become a student at the studio.

After you are set up to join the class, you will be asked to leave your belongings in a designated area, including shoes. Yoga is best practiced in bare feet, but if you need to keep socks on, it is recommended you purchase socks that fit snugly with grips on the bottom. There are socks specifically designed for yoga practice at most retailers that sell yoga apparel and equipment.

Some studios have mats and props you can use at no charge, and others charge a fee. Be prepared for the possibility of additional costs for these resources.

Once you enter the yoga room, find a spot to place your mat that will give you an arm's length between you and your neighbor if possible. Some studios have mat areas marked for placement, due to space limitations. Always feel welcome to ask questions if you are unsure.

Check out the vibe in the room. The majority of yoga studios prefer you are quiet before a class to give the other attendees time to focus and relax, however it truly depends on the studio and attendees. There is no right or wrong in this situation, so enter the class with no judgment about how others should be behaving. Enjoy the eccentricities that come with every studio and allow them to bring you joy!



You do not need to change to begin. You do not need to prove anything to belong. Step onto your mat with curiosity, not judgment – and trust that you are enough.

Let's Talk About Props

How simple tools like blocks, straps, and blankets support your practice.

Let's talk about props.

“Props” is a foreign word to new attendees, and it can be a little stressful trying to decide what you need and why. Most instructors will recommend specific props that might be helpful during their class. Here's a breakdown of what they are and why you might choose them:

Blocks are your best friend when you begin yoga. Blocks aren't just for beginners, they are used by experienced practitioners regularly. As a beginner, think of blocks as an extension of your arms. They give you more space in poses that might feel straining or unreachable. Having blocks at your mat will be your security blanket... so use them!

Blankets are used in various ways, including extra softness under your knees, and placing in various places under or over your body to support you in your poses.

Bolsters are firm cushions that come in various sizes and are used for propping you in poses that might be difficult for your body to reach. Bolsters are generally used in Restorative or Gentle yoga classes to create a softer more sustainable pose.

Straps/belts are used to assist in stretching and holding balance. It is an extension of your arms to help you reach, hold or support a pose when your flexibility or strength isn't there yet.

Beginning Your Practice

A few simple ideas that help you feel comfortable and confident as you start your yoga journey.

Beginning Your Practice.

Beginning yoga does not require special ability, flexibility, or experience. It simply requires a willingness to start where you are.

Each time you step onto the mat, you bring your current energy, mood, and physical condition with you. Some days your body may feel strong and open. Other days it may feel tight, tired, or distracted. All of these experiences are a normal part of practice.

Yoga is not about performing poses perfectly. It is about learning to listen to your body and move with awareness.

As you begin your practice, remember a few simple principles:

- **Move at a pace that allows you to breathe comfortably.**
- **If something feels painful or strained, soften or modify the pose.**
- **Rest whenever your body needs it.**
- **Focus on how the posture feels rather than how it looks.**

Consistency matters more than intensity. A gentle, regular practice helps the body build strength, flexibility, balance, and resilience over time.

Most importantly, approach your practice with curiosity and patience. Yoga is not something you master in a single class. It is a process of learning, observing, and gradually developing awareness.

Every time you come to the mat, you are simply practicing the art of being present.

Fundamentals of Your Practice

*The essential elements that create a safe and meaningful
yoga experience.*

Fundamentals of your practice.

The beauty of yoga is that there is no cookie-cutter way to practice, and even as you practice you can adjust and modify according to what your body needs. Every person in a class can look a little different in their practice as the instructor leads them, and that is completely acceptable and valued because you are listening to your body. You will find that every class and every instructor will be unique, but there will usually be common components to your yoga class.

Beginning a yoga practice with **breathwork and mindfulness** sets the tone for everything that follows—physically, mentally, and energetically. Here's why this opening matters so much:

Breath is the bridge between the body and the mind.

Intentional breathing at the start of practice:

- Regulates the nervous system, shifting the body from stress (sympathetic) into calm focus (parasympathetic)
- Improves oxygen delivery, preparing muscles and joints for movement
- Establishes rhythm, helping movements later in practice feel fluid and intentional
- Enhances safety, encouraging students to move within their limits rather than pushing or forcing

Breath awareness also teaches students to notice when they are holding tension—often the first step toward releasing it.

Mindfulness: Arriving Fully on the Mat

Mindfulness invites students to transition from the busyness of daily life into the present moment. At the beginning of practice, it:

- Anchors attention, reducing distraction and mental chatter
- Builds body awareness, helping students sense alignment, effort, and ease
- Supports emotional regulation, allowing space for whatever the practitioner brings with them
- Creates intention, turning the practice into something purposeful rather than purely physical

By cultivating mindfulness early, students are more likely to remain present throughout the class—deepening both focus and experience.

The Combined Effect

Together, breathwork and mindfulness:

- Prepare the body safely and efficiently
- Create a mind-body connection that enhances every posture
- Encourage a practice that is sustainable, intuitive, and inwardly guided
- Transform yoga from exercise into a holistic practice of awareness

Starting with breath and mindfulness isn't just a warm-up— it's an invitation to practice yoga with intention, presence, and care.

Setting an Intention

Setting an intention is the practice of choosing a positive focus for your time on the mat.

An intention is a simple word, phrase, or feeling that reflects how you want to show up — not what you want to accomplish.

Unlike a goal, which is about achieving something in the future, an intention is about guiding your presence in this moment.

It often begins with “I am,” “I choose,” or “I allow,” and represents a quality you wish to embody, such as calm, strength, patience, compassion, or gratitude.

The purpose of setting an intention is to bring clarity and gentle direction to your practice from beginning to end. At the start of class, you pause to choose your focus. As you move, breathe, and settle into stillness, you revisit that intention again and again. Each return strengthens your awareness and anchors you in the present moment.

By carrying your intention throughout the entire practice, you transform movement into mindfulness and build a deeper connection between your mind and body. Over time, the qualities you cultivate on the mat begin to influence how you respond to challenges, conversations, and everyday life.

The following pages will help you explore and create your own intentions. Use them in whatever way feels helpful to you. Some days you may write and reflect more, while other days you may simply choose a word and begin. Your intention is personal, and can change from day to day.

Use the steps below to create a simple intention that feels meaningful to you.

1. Check in with yourself. Take a moment to pause and notice how you are feeling.

Right now I feel:

2. Think about what would support you most during your practice.

Today I need more:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patience | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Create your intention. Many intentions begin with "I am", "I choose", or "I allow"

Examples:

I am strong

I choose patience

I allow myself to relax

My Intention:

Examples of Intentions

For calm and relaxation:

- I am calm.
- I allow myself to soften.
- I breathe and let go.
- I welcome ease.

For strength and confidence:

- I am strong and steady.
- I trust my body.
- I move with confidence.
- I am capable.

For patience and self-compassion:

- I choose patience.
- I treat myself with kindness.
- I move without judgment.
- I honor where I am today.

For focus and presence:

- I am present.
- I focus on my breath.
- I return to this moment.
- I move with awareness.

Write a few words or phrases that resonate with you:

Yoga Poses (referred to as Asana)

The basics of alignment in the poses provide a framework for practicing safely, efficiently, and with greater awareness.

Alignment is not about achieving a “perfect” shape—it’s about organizing the body in a way that supports stability, mobility, and ease for each individual.

Stacking and Structure

At its foundation, alignment emphasizes stacking joints and bones so the body can support itself with minimal strain.

- Head balanced over shoulders
- Shoulders over hips
- Hips over knees or ankles (when applicable)

This stacking allows the skeletal system to bear weight, reducing overuse of muscles and protecting joints.

Joint Safety and Range of Motion

Proper alignment respects the natural range of motion of the joints.

- Knees track in the same direction as toes
- Wrists, elbows, and shoulders are positioned to avoid compression
- Spine moves with awareness through flexion, extension, rotation, and neutral

Balance of Effort and Ease

Alignment encourages a balance between effort and ease—engaging the muscles that support the pose while allowing the rest of the body to stay comfortable and relaxed.

- Engage muscles that support the pose
- Release unnecessary tension elsewhere
- Avoid collapsing into joints or over-gripping

This balance helps postures feel strong yet sustainable.

Awareness and Sensation

Alignment is guided as much by internal sensation as by external cues.

- Notice where effort is required versus where softness is possible
- Use the breath as feedback—strained breathing often signals misalignment
- Adjust based on how the body feels, not how the pose looks

This cultivates mindfulness and body intelligence.

Individual Variation

Every body is different. True alignment:

- Honors differences in bone structure, flexibility, and strength
- Encourages the use of props and modifications
- Prioritizes function over aesthetics

Savasana, often called Corpse Pose, is usually practiced at the end of a yoga class. While it looks simple, it is one of the most important postures—especially for beginners—because it allows the body and mind to fully absorb the benefits of the practice.

In Savasana, you lie flat on your back in a comfortable, relaxed position:

- Legs extended and slightly apart
- Arms resting by your sides, palms facing up
- Eyes gently closed

Some instructors will offer a restorative pose in Savasana, utilizing blankets, bolsters, and eye pillows.

The goal is complete rest, not effort.

Why Savasana is important

The practice of Savasana:

- Allows the nervous system to settle after movement
- Helps the body integrate strength, stretching, and breathwork
- Encourages deep relaxation and stress release
- Teaches the skill of stillness and awareness

Without Savasana, the benefits of the practice remain incomplete.

What to Do With the Mind

It's normal for the mind to wander, especially at first.

In Savasana:

- Let thoughts come and go without engaging them
- Gently return attention to the breath or body
- There is no need to “clear” the mind—just observe

Making It Comfortable

Comfort is essential. Beginners should feel free to:

- Use a blanket for warmth
- Place a bolster or rolled blanket under the knees to ease the lower back
- Support the head or neck if needed

A relaxed body supports a relaxed mind.

How Long to Stay

Savasana typically lasts 5–10 minutes, but even a few minutes can be beneficial. Stay until you feel calm, grounded, and present.



Some Common Poses

*A visual guide to foundational yoga postures you may
see in class*

Some Common Poses



Easy Pose



Child's Pose



Seated Forward Fold



Downward Facing Dog



Mountain Pose



Tree Pose



Warrior I



Warrior II



Triangle Pose



Tabletop



Sphinx Pose



Half Pigeon



Cobra



Upward Facing Dog



Boat Pose



Camel Pose



Standing Forward Fold



Corpse Pose

What are Modifications & Variations?

You might hear your yoga teacher offer “modifications” throughout the practice. Modifications are simple adjustments to change the pose to make it more adaptable to you. A modification can be a softer, more attainable pose, by using props or adjusting your stance. A variation can refer to a different version of the pose, by adding a bind (connecting two areas of the body together), a deeper stance, or adding a balancing option. Whether your teacher offers modifications to you or not, it is always encouraged to take modifications where you feel you need them. When you are unsure, a child’s pose, tabletop, or downward dog are good options. You know your body better than anyone, so take the signals from your body and follow suit.

Common References & Cues

*Helpful Explanations of words and cues instructors
often use.*

Common References & Cues

“Engage”

What it means:

A cue inviting you to gently activate specific muscles to create support, stability, and control in a posture.

It is a conscious turning on of muscle effort – without gripping or straining.

Purpose:

To protect joints, support the spine, improve balance and strength, create steadiness in transitions, and prevent collapsing into ligaments

“Engage your core.”

What it means:

Gently draw the navel toward the spine and lift the pelvic floor slightly.

Purpose:

Supports the lower back and improves stability.

Bandha

What it means:

Bandha translates to “lock” or “seal.” It refers to gentle muscular engagements that support stability and guide energy within the body.

Purpose:

To protect the spine, support the core, improve balance and strength, and contain or challenge energy.

In most classes, when you hear “engage your core,” you are lightly activating bandha.

Mudra

What it means:

A mudra is a symbolic hand position or gesture used to influence energy, focus, and intention during practice.

Purpose:

To direct energy (prana), deepen concentration, reinforce intention, and create a subtle mind–body connection

“Root down”

What it means:

“Root down” is a cue that invites you to press firmly and intentionally into the surface beneath you — whether through the feet, hands, knees, or sit bones.

It encourages grounding before lifting or expanding.

Purpose:

To create stability and balance, engage supportive muscles, protect joints, build strength from the foundation up, and enhance energetic grounding.

“Stack your joints.”

What it means:

Align shoulders over hips, hips over knees, knees over ankles—depending on the posture.

Purpose:

Creates stability and protects joints.

“Neutral spine.”

What it means:

Maintain the natural curves of the spine—not overly arched, not rounded.

Purpose:

Protects the lower back and promotes core stability.

“Inhale, lengthen.”

What it means:

Use your breath to create space in the body. Feel the spine grow taller, the chest broaden, or the crown of the head lift.

Purpose:

Encourages expansion, posture awareness, and oxygen flow.

“Exhale, soften.”

What it means:

Release unnecessary tension. Let the shoulders drop, the jaw unclench, and the body settle deeper into the pose.

Purpose:

Activates the parasympathetic nervous system and prevents over-efforting.

“Shoulders away from the ears.”

What it means:

Soften and lower the shoulders while widening across the collarbones.

Purpose:

Reduces neck tension and improves posture.

“Press evenly through all four corners of the feet.”

What it means:

Distribute weight between the big toe mound, little toe mound, inner heel, and outer heel.

Purpose:

Improves balance and prevents collapsing into arches.

" Find Your Drishti", or Focal Point

What it means:

Drishti means “focused gaze.” It's often referred to as your "Focal Point". It is where you place your eyes during a posture.

Purpose:

To improve balance, enhance concentration, reduce distractions, and encourage internal focus.

“Notice.”

What it means:

Bring awareness to sensation, breath, and mental patterns without judgment.

Purpose:

Cultivates mindfulness.

Hands-On Assists

What it means:

Hands-on assists are gentle, intentional physical adjustments offered by the instructor to support alignment, stability, or relaxation in a posture.

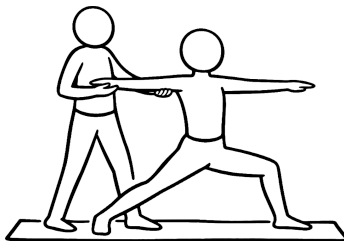
They are always optional and designed to enhance awareness – not to force depth or flexibility.

Purpose:

To improve alignment and body awareness, enhance stability and safety, and to deepen relaxation in gentle or restorative poses. In addition, hands-on assists are used to help students feel supported and grounded, and to reinforce verbal cues through touch.

Note:

Hands-on assists are not used in every yoga class. When they are offered, instructors typically announce this at the beginning of class and provide a simple way for students to communicate their preference. For example, an instructor might say, “Today I will be offering hands-on assists. If you prefer not to receive one, please place the card I’ve given you face down at the corner of your mat.” This allows each student to comfortably choose what feels right for their practice.



Your Practice, Your Journey

A reminder that yoga grows with you over time.

Your Practice, Your Journey

Yoga is not about touching your toes. It is about what you learn on the way down.

Whether you are stepping onto the mat for the first time or deepening a long-standing practice, remember this: yoga is a relationship with yourself. It is a conversation between breath and body, strength and softness, effort and ease.

You do not need to be flexible.

You do not need to be strong.

You do not need to be perfect.

You simply need to begin.

The breath will guide you.

Alignment will support you.

Mindfulness will ground you.

Rest will restore you.

Some days your practice will feel powerful.

Some days it will feel quiet.

Both are equally valuable.

Yoga invites you to root down and rise up — to engage with intention, to release with trust, and to move forward without judgment.

May you return to your mat not as a place of pressure, but as a place of possibility.

May your practice remind you that growth takes time. May you carry what you learn here into your everyday life. ~ **Namaste**

You may hear the word Namaste at the end of class. Namaste is a traditional greeting often shared at the end of a yoga practice. It is a way of expressing respect, gratitude, and connection.

In yoga, it is commonly interpreted as “the light in me honors the light in you.” It reflects the idea that each person carries value, dignity, and goodness within them.

It is simply a gesture of kindness and connection.

Often, the hands come together at the heart and the head bows slightly. This small movement represents respect — for yourself, for others in the room, and for the effort everyone made during practice.

At its heart, Namaste means:

We showed up.

We practiced.

We supported one another.

And for that, we are grateful.

May this practice always remind you that the beauty you seek has been within you all along.



Photo by Paula Goble Photography

About the Author

Leslie Nelson is a native and lifelong resident of Eastern Kentucky. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Kentucky and practiced nursing for five years before making the decision to stay home and raise her two daughters.

During that season of life, Leslie became involved in group fitness instruction, deepening her passion for movement and overall wellness. After a serious car accident, she turned to yoga as part of her physical and emotional recovery. What began as rehabilitation soon became something much more – a practice that supported her nervous system, strengthened her body, and restored her sense of balance.

She fell in love with yoga not just as exercise, but as a pathway to healing and wholeness.

In 2019, Leslie began teaching yoga and opened Beauty Within Yoga Studio later that same year, creating a welcoming space where students of all ages and abilities can begin with confidence. Her background in nursing continues to inform her teaching, bringing an understanding of safety, anatomy, and whole-person care into every class.

She lives in Eastern Kentucky with her husband and their four dogs. She believes yoga is not about perfection – it is about presence.

About Beauty Within Yoga Studio

Beauty Within Yoga Studio was created to be a welcoming space where people of all ages, backgrounds, and ability levels can explore yoga in a supportive environment.

Located in Eastern Kentucky, the studio offers a variety of classes designed to meet students where they are – whether they are stepping onto a yoga mat for the very first time or deepening an established practice.

At Beauty Within Yoga Studio, the focus is not on perfection or performance. The intention is to help students build strength, balance, flexibility, and confidence while cultivating a sense of calm and connection within themselves.

Yoga is not about becoming someone new – it is about discovering the strength, steadiness, and beauty that already exist within you.



Visit Us

Beauty Within Yoga Studio
225 East Graham Street
Prestonsburg, Kentucky 41653
606-471-3199

Schedule, classes, and information:
www.beautywithinyoga.com

Follow along for updates and inspiration:
Instagram & Facebook: [beauty_within_yoga_studio](#)

***You don't need to be flexible to begin yoga --
you just need the confidence to start.***

Yoga can transform your strength, balance, and peace of mind — but beginning without guidance can feel overwhelming.

Yoga with Confidence bridges the gap between curiosity and clarity. Designed especially for beginners, this guide explains common cues, foundational alignment, breath awareness, relaxation, and studio etiquette in a clear and supportive way.

From your very first class to a growing personal practice, this book helps you move with understanding, breathe with intention, and practice with confidence.

Inside this guide you'll discover:

- What to expect when visiting a yoga studio for the first time
- Clear explanations of common yoga cues and terminology
- Simple guidance for breath awareness and relaxation
- Beginner-friendly explanations of alignment and posture
- Tools to help you build a sustainable and confident practice

Whether you are stepping onto the mat for the first time or simply looking for clarity in your practice, this guide will help you begin with confidence.

Let this be the guide that helps you begin exactly where you are.