

# THE GOOD LIFE

*Yoga has become an international phenomenon known for its healing and balancing properties.*

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The concept of sustainability ultimately refers to the potential for the long-term maintenance of the well-being of an entity. Whether it is the environment, the economy, or the spiritual, sustainability means the balancing and improvement of a system to make our lives more efficient and beneficial. What is hardly ever discussed is the sustainability of our spiritual and physical well-being. Without being at peace with ourselves, how we will ever be proactive to improve the sustainability of other systems such as the environment, and healthcare? The sustainability of one's spiritual and physical well-being is crucial to the rejuvenation of the self and body and is the key to improving our social and environmental systems.

Yoga is especially renowned for empowering, strengthening and connecting the mind, spirit, and body, and is thus an ideal example for spiritual and physical sustainability. To take a certain angle on spiritual and physical sustainability, by

profiling on one country, Kenya is a country that has benefited from the encouragement of the regular practice of yoga. From a BBC article entitled, "How yoga is stretching the bodies and minds of Kenyans", it is clear that yoga is empowering not only the individual, but also the whole community as a whole.

The African Yoga Project (AYP) is a non-profit organization that offers free classes and extends to the poorest communities. The AYP holds classes in the Sarakasi Dome and features three-hour classes where students can focus, stretch, and meditate while the instructor, Moses Mbjah, preaches to the class to "accept who you are, take your mask off. Everybody is wearing a mask". The creator of vinyasa yoga, Baron Baptiste, established AYP in Nairobi in 2007. His objective of the organization was "to use the transformative influence of yoga to empower both individual and community expresses".

The known benefits of practicing yoga are stimulation,

detoxification of the blood, improved metabolism and also a reduced susceptibility to infection. The desire to utilize yoga as a means of individual and community empowerment was the result of a need for social stability; in other words, the community was in need for spiritual and personal sustainability. The AYP project also offers its students a chance to share their experiences and start to feel comfortable opening up to others.

Many people who practice yoga see yoga as both a spiritual and physical experience. Adam Cheino is one such yogi, who finds yoga to be a force that allows him to open up and mix with other people, as well as cope with stress. For yoga instructor Mr. Mbjah, the importance of belonging in a safe community without boundaries and opening up is extremely beneficial. "Kenyans have a lot of tribal issues and this is a boundary. I am always teaching about not having boundaries."

My personal perspective on

the effectiveness of the spiritual and physical sustainability of yoga leads me to believe that there is has a tremendous potential for yoga in the community. If the African Yoga Project can empower communities in Kenya, then that same positive energy can just the same be applied to North America's troubled communities as well. Making yoga clinics available for youth would be tremendous for expanding the mind and body, and to distract from other areas of tension in their lives. More communities in North America should definitely take advantage of this avenue that detoxifies both your mental and physical state of being.

The African Yoga Project is just one example of how yoga can profoundly impact the spiritual and physical sustainability of anyone practicing yoga. Sustainability is about having complete equilibrium in every aspect of your life, whether it is environmental, spiritual, physical, or economic. F