

The Restorative Power of Viniyoga

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Viniyoga is a practice that demands self awareness and attunement to one's physical, emotional and mental reality.



Maya instructor **Kristen Swanzy-O'Conner** attended her first Viniyoga class because she was curious. "I went in with an open mind," she says. "I had previously explored Kundalini and Hatha yoga styles, but I found the Viniyoga experience to be very different."

Let the Unseen Become Seen. According to [The American Viniyoga™ Institute](#), Viniyoga (tasya bhūmiṣu viniyogaḥ) is an Sanskrit term that implies differentiation, adaptation and appropriate application. With a strong focus on alignment, the practice uses asana, pranayama as well as chanting, meditation, personal ritual and others, all adapted to a

student's needs. It is a modern approach to the practice of Sri T. Krishnamacharya, father of many styles of yoga including Iyengar, Bikram and Ashtanga. "What makes it so affective and innovative is the concept of the release valve -the unconscious compensatory movements that dilute the value of any asana and can lead to potential injury over time," Kristen says. As a result, the practice is available to students with physical limitations due to injury, illness or age. Another plus: through regular practice, Kristen believes Viniyoga can transform physically- and mentally-limited individuals into harmonious and balanced beings. She says, "Through this practice, we seek to learn about ourselves, become students of our bodies, relieving the stagnancy and stress of modern living."

Slow Down. Kristen's first experience with Viniyoga compelled her to consciously slow down, which in turn allowed her to observe a whole world of subtleties. "Even though it was new and challenging, I could tell Viniyoga would be worthwhile, because I was asked to bring more attention to what I was doing. When this happens, the practice becomes about getting to know yourself better, taking care of you, listening more, tuning in to your needs." Since then, she continues to study with the same teacher, and became certified to teach Viniyoga in 2008.



"Viniyoga is a style that is truly available to all people regardless of flexibility or fitness level. I also recommend exploring a Pilates class, to establish basic awareness and breathing.

A regular Pilates practice can complement all yoga styles and excel the development of perception."

We all begin somewhere. "Viniyoga does not force us to strive for achievement of a fixed posture, but rather embraces an individual's constitutional differences," Kristen explains. "It opens us up to experience an ease of breath and movement that is not part of our routine, but which is necessary to become steady and comfortable."

Viniyoga at Maya. Kristen leads several Viniyoga classes on our regular schedule; all provide gentle, effective strengthening of the core, increasing in flexibility. Great for runners, cyclists and others who engage in repetitive athletic activities, as well as for those with mobility limitations, the specific sequences are designed to create calm, focus and to move synovial fluids into joints and tissues that have become locked down through everyday living.

Whatever leads you into a Viniyoga class, Kristen suggests you make sure to bring your awareness with you, and be prepared to restore your mind, body and connection to spirit.