

Difference between Yoga and Physical Exercise

Ultimate goal of Exercise and Yoga

People often exercise for two main reasons: to have better physical health overall or to achieve weight loss. Of course, there are also other reasons, such as improving blood circulation, developing athletic skills, toning the various muscle groups, and others. In other words, the ultimate goal of a person who exercises is to improve his or her physical appearance or physical health.

While most people who do yoga can also improve their physical appearance and health, the ultimate goal of yoga is to reach a higher state of consciousness. To achieve this, they execute yoga postures (asanas), practice proper breathing (pranayama), perform appropriate body gestures (mudra), and do internal cleansing (shatkarma) by getting rid of emotional blockages on a person's energy centres (chakras).

Part of the nervous system involved in Exercise and Yoga

Exercising involves the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for reducing digestive secretions, contracting blood vessels, and speeding the heart. It also counteracts the physiological effects of the parasympathetic nervous system. As a result, exercising produces a feeling of tiredness.

Yoga involves the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts the physiological effects of the sympathetic nervous system. It is responsible for stimulating digestive secretions, dilating blood vessels, slowing the heart, and constricting the pupils. In other words, doing yoga produces a feeling of relaxation.

Equipment required for Exercise and Yoga

Exercising typically requires equipment, which is limiting in terms of the physical activities one can do. It is also limiting in terms of where one can perform the exercise/s. Some exercises even require one's participation in partner or group activities.

Yoga is generally self-sufficient. This means it can be performed without any equipment. Even a yoga mat is not an absolute requirement. All a person needs is adequate space for the poses to be performed.

Oxygen consumption for Exercise and Yoga

Exercising, particularly one that involves cardio, results in increased oxygen consumption.

One of the focuses of yoga is proper breathing. Consequently, proper breathing techniques lead to reduced oxygen consumption.

Caloric consumption for Exercise and Yoga

The nature of most exercises results in moderate to high caloric consumption, which is usually why most people are typically famished after exercising.

Yoga, on the other hand, results in relatively low caloric consumption, which is why yogis generally consume less food than people who exercise.

Energy conservation in Exercise and Yoga

Exercising is a catabolic process, which is characterized by destructive metabolism. In other words, it is capable of breaking down the energy.

Yoga is anabolic, which is characterized by or promoting constructive metabolism. In other words, it is capable of conserving energy.

Type of movement in Exercise and Yoga

Exercising normally requires rapid, forceful movements.

On the other hand, yoga generally calls for slow, dynamic movements.

Toning of the muscles

Exercising helps tone the muscles.

Yoga is not concerned with toning the muscles per se. However, many poses or movements lead to muscle strengthening.

Risk of injury involved in Exercise vs. Yoga

Exercise involves a high risk of injury because most physical activities greatly affect the muscles and ligaments.

Yoga involves a low risk of injury because the poses have little impact on the muscles and ligaments.

Health and age restrictions

Exercising is often performed by people who are in good health since many of the activities are difficult to do when one is sick. Furthermore, while there are exercises that older individuals can perform, the more strenuous activities are usually done by younger people.

Yoga can be performed whether the person is sick or not. There is also no age limit when performing most yoga poses.

Effects on the joints

Most physical exercises have the tendency to over-work the joints, which can result in stiffness or rheumatism as the person grows older.

Yoga has no adverse effects on the joints.

Goal-oriented vs. process-oriented

Exercise is goal-oriented, which is why most activities are highly competitive.

Yoga is non-competitive since it is more focused on the process.