



WHY MORE MEN SHOULD DO YOGA

A rallying call to all guys out there on why the world needs them to take up yoga. By Tarik Dervish

What makes a man, a man? Words immortalised by the singer, Charles Aznavour. We kind of know what we mean but when we try to articulate it, we fall short of explanation because manliness is something felt. The astrological Mars represents the inner warrior in all of us: women, men and non-binaries alike. We all have an inner Mars — that is, masculine traits and how we express them depends on how we were brought up.

Here are some of the key positive qualities of masculinity:

- Mars is strong
- Mars is brave and willing to take risks
- Mars is logical and rational
- Mars is devoted to solving problems and fixing things
- Mars has a competitive spirit
- Mars asserts himself to get what he wants
- Mars is very sensual and likes sex

Mars can detach from his emotions easily
Mars is very task- and goal-oriented
Mars needs to retreat when hurt or wounded

The above qualities are what society admires about masculinity. But it also complains about them because where there are strengths, there are weaknesses — and any couple will recognise the difficulties that arise when it comes to the softer qualities needed to sustain a relationship like empathy, listening, caring, compassion and affection.

Men largely embody the qualities of Mars and women embody those of Venus but let me repeat: everyone has both masculine and feminine traits whether they are expressed or not.

Male liberation

Society needs a male liberation more than anything else. Many of the world's imbalances are caused by the decisions made by men. Thankfully the political landscape is changing — but progress is slow, and time is running out.

They say that us men have very fragile egos, and this is very evident in the way men behave when they are backed into a corner. Men have a need to control everything and everyone around them.

Yoga and liberation

Yoga practice and meditation can really help to bring balance to the male psyche. As men, we really need to be physical and with regular asana practice, a lot of emotional tension can be dispelled in a constructive way. Men who devote themselves to the challenges of asana practice can get really good at it because asana practice presents a really fulfilling vehicle in a whole variety of ways. Regular practice can bring the clarity and mental spaciousness which we need to be able to act more skilfully and less reactively.

The yoga world is dominated by women. Even the British Wheel of Yoga, one of the biggest and most diverse yoga organisations in the UK, has only a 10% male membership, yet the irony is that men need yoga as much, if not more, than women do. Men are often intimidated when they first go to a yoga class because they might be the only guy there. Moreover women tend to be more supple so men may feel they can't 'compete'.

Rallying call

It may be good for men to go to 'men only' classes at first. It can make a huge difference to building confidence and a strong foundation in practice. When I used to teach in London, 30% of my students were men because they felt more comfortable with a male teacher. The more men go, the more men will go!

So, I want to blow the trumpet and say: "Come on guys! Yoga will make you more of man not less. It will make you stronger, fitter, clearer, calmer, more stable and focused so you can achieve your goals and gain more satisfaction from life. You will learn to trust life more and leave the world alone!"

It certainly turned my life around. It will bring out the best in your manliness and improve your life in all respects. Yoga is helping to bring about a quiet revolution, one person at a time, and if more men embraced it, the pace of change would double. 🙏

Tarik Dervish is the current BWY modules officer, and an experienced yoga teacher/trainer and ayurvedic practitioner. He runs yoga classes online, co-tutors a BWYQ Yoga Teacher Training Certificate programme and a BWY accredited Ayurveda in Action online course with Dr Cathy Mae Karelse. For more information visit his website: yogawell.co.uk