

8 Limbs of Yoga

1. Yama

- A. Ahimsā: nonviolence, non-harming other living beings
- B. Satya: truthfulness, non-falsehood
- C. Asteya: non-stealing, not taking what isn't freely given
- D. Brahmacharya: wise use of energy (including sexual energy), self-control, moderation
- E. Aparigraha: non-possessiveness, not accumulating what is not essential

2. Niyama

- A. Śauca: purity, clearness of mind, speech and body
- B. Santoṣa: contentment, acceptance of others and of one's circumstances as they are, optimism for self
- C. Tapas: perserverance, discipline, patience
- D. Svādhyāya: study of self, self-reflection, introspection of self's thoughts, speeches and actions
- E. Īśvarapraṇidhāna: devotion, dedication to the ideal of pure awareness, true self

3. **Asana** – postures practiced in yoga, body is a temple, preparation for meditation

4. **Pranayama** – breath control, connecting breath-mind-emotions

5. **Pratyahara** – withdraw from the external stimuli and look at our internal self

6. **Dharana** – concentration on a single point, before meditation, object, mantra, etc.

7. **Dhyana** – meditation, state of keenly aware without focus

8. **Samadhi** – state of ecstasy, connection to divine and all living things

1. Yama

A. Ahimsā: nonviolence, non-harming other living beings

- Nonviolence in our actions, feelings, thoughts or words
- Compassion towards self and others
- Kindness and caring
- Instead of pushing the body to a place of pain or discomfort, cultivate awareness
- Care for self through exercise, healthy nourishment, stress management
- Avoiding negative self-talk
- Listening

B. Satya : truthfulness, non-falsehood

- Speak your truth - including fears and obstacles faced
- Speak, think and focus on the positive to manifest a positive experience
- This is a lifelong practice of pausing to see if choices align us to our truth or put us off balance
- Our words have a profound effect on our consciousness
- Buddhism - similar - Right Speech - choose words that are non-harming and supportive to all living beings
- Slow down, filter and carefully choose words that reflect ahimsa (non-violence)
- Note the difference between perceptions/beliefs/judgments and the truth
- Use statements that allow freedom of change - for example:
- "I can't do yoga because I am not flexible" changes to "Today I am not feeling flexible and I feel like I need to do yoga."
- Avoid over-committing, false friendships and saying things that you don't really mean
- When we speak from satya - we bring out the best in others

C. Asteya: not stealing, not taking what is not freely given

- Not being overly demanding of others (studio staff, peers, friends)
- Give credit to others when you can
- Focus on patience - impatience is like stealing time

D. Brahmacharya: wise use of energy (including sexual energy), self-control, and moderation

- Essence is honouring yourself and others in intimate relationships
- Focus towards the balance of actions, thoughts, feelings to align with a spiritual path
- Everything in moderation
- Acceptance of what is - letting go of attachment to certain outcomes
- Being in the present moment

E. Aparigraha: non-possessiveness, not accumulating what is not essential

- Letting go of ego
- Very natural to feel protective, but we can also move into a primal fight or flight response
- Being prepared and at the same time being able to release “the plan”

2. Niyama

A. Śauca: purity, clearness of mind, speech and body, cleanliness

- In thoughts, feelings, respect for the body, mind and spirit
- Treat your body like a temple
- Regular yoga practice, bathing, eating fresh, whole foods
- Cleansing the mind as well - meditation, affirmations, visualization, mantras

B. Santosa: contentment, acceptance of others and of one’s circumstances as they are, optimism for self

- Accept changes to the body, emotions and relationships as they occur
- Study and gain knowledge - to gain awareness
- When we have choices we can easily release fear
- Regular yoga practice helps to increase awareness and acceptance
- Accept what is happening and flow with it
- Cultivate confidence to carry you through challenges faced
- Life offers an ongoing process for learning, growing and evolving - realizing this bring us towards self-acceptance

C. Tapas: perseverance, discipline, patience

- Sustained practice
- Translates to discipline - can relate to a regular yoga practice

D. Svādhyāya: study of self, self-reflection, and introspection of self’s thoughts, speeches and actions

- Focus inward on fears, changes, challenges, emotions
- Connect with inner strength and knowledge - you can discover even more than you believed to exist
- Notice how you deal with health challenges - to learn more about yourself and to strengthen your coping mechanisms
- Notice without judgment

E. Īśvarapraṇidhāna: devotion, dedication to the ideal of pure awareness, true self

- Divine empowerment, beyond the individual self
- Connect to something that suits your beliefs (divine, God, mothers of all time, mother earth, spirit, universe, etc.)
- Pass anything over to this divine empowerment that you feel is beyond what you can handle
- Surrender and have faith, trust that this divine energy will support and guide you

3. Asana: postures practiced in yoga, body is a temple, preparation for meditation

- Cultivation of physical and psychological steadiness
- Ease of breath, mind and body
- Awareness of body

4. Pranayama: breath control, connecting breath-mind-emotions

- Breath brings forward so many things – both calming and energizing
- Our mind follows the breath - therefore we can control the mind when we control the breath
- Stilling the mind via the breath

5. Pratyahara: withdraw from the external stimuli and look at our internal self

- Finding an inward focus (very beneficial during challenges)
- Observing habits in that may be not serving us
- Not allowing external distractions to become who we are (within in a yoga class, but also in life)
- Many times we cannot control the chaos that can arise, but we can focus on who we would like to be in these experiences

6. Dharana: concentration on a single point, before meditation, object, mantra, etc.

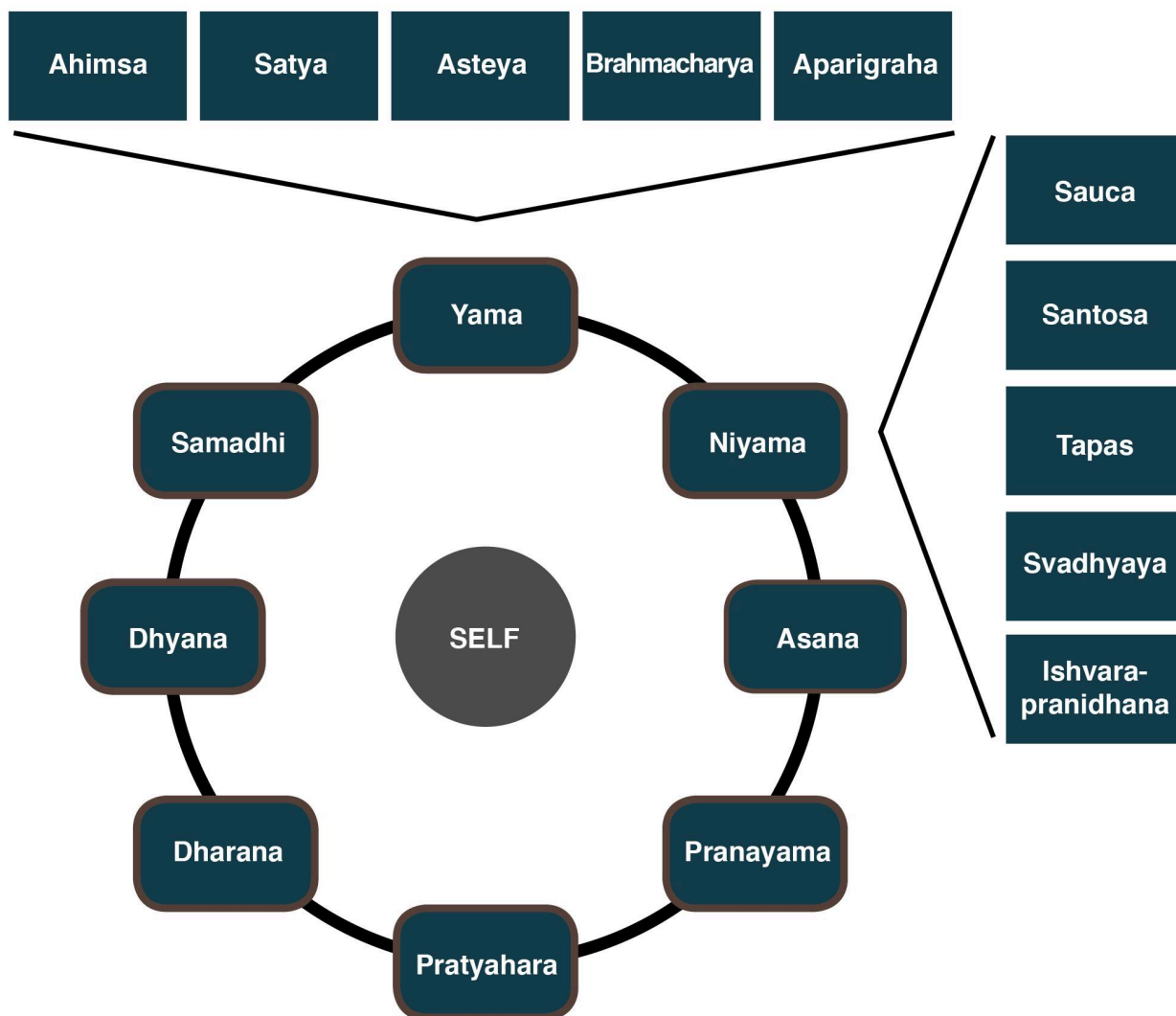
- Connecting with a single object (breath, sound, sensation in the body) until awareness becomes singular and focused
- Mindful connection to each sensation in the body
- Not allowing the mind to run away
- Being present in breath, movement and intention
- Can use mantras, sounding, breath, sensations or affirmations to assist focus

7. Dhyana: meditation, state of keenly aware without focus

- Meditation concentrating not only on one thing, but all encompassing
- Concentration deepens to point where subject and object dissolve
- Embracing a calm state without needing it to be stillness

8. Samadhi: state of ecstasy, connection to divine and all living things

- Sustained experience of concentration to the point of integration of subject and object
- Pure awareness and zero separation
- Bliss experiences
- Trusting the self
- Powerful feeling of connection to others and to self
- Connection to divine energy



Artwork thanks to Ashley Hagen of AshesYoga.com