**What is Kundalini Yoga?**

Kundalini Yoga (KY) is an applied science, mixing different types of ancient yoga practices: Raj Yoga, Hatha yoga, Bhakti yoga, Shakthi yoga, Naad yoga, Mantra yoga, Laya yoga, etc.

It uses various and numerous tools and techniques in each class, such as physical work (Asanas), breathing techniques (Pranayam), meditation, relaxation, sound (Naad), mantra, etc.

Kundalini yoga works on the physical, mental and spiritual realms (Mind, Body and Soul).

Feel free to focus only on the physical aspect if it’s what you’re interested in, but be aware that Kundalini is called THE yoga of spirituality and awareness.

That being said, there’s NO connection with religion whatsoever (although it started within the Sikh community).

We do use a lot of scientific explanations during the classes; both from the Yogic disciplines and from the Western Sciences (anatomy, psychology, neurosciences, endocrinology, quantum physics, etc). There are now plenty of ‘proper’ scientific researches and studies on yoga and meditation, and Kundalini Yoga is not an exception (i.e. <https://kundaliniresearchinstitute.org/>). See for example in Annex the results of 2 researches done on a particular meditation we use in KY called ‘Kirtan Kriya’.

You’re obviously welcome, whatever your beliefs may be; an actual God, the Collective Consciousness, your own self-created God, Science, Nature, Gaia, The Biofield of the Entire Universe, your higher Self or Nothing!..

Our minds are like our telephones, we are always transmitting and receiving signals. But which ones? We are mostly unaware because each thought is clouded by our ego and its likes, dislikes, opinions, worries, fears, etc. Mindful Kundalini yoga help us tuning in the right higher channels, just like we pick up the best radio station we want to hear in the car. It is a conscious and intentional mindset that leads to higher frequencies in our electromagnetic field and more balanced energies throughout the chakras, mind and spirit.

It is important to mention that KY is designed to quickly and easily help people with busy lives and it is accessible to anybody. It has been taught as a yoga for households; helping real people dealing with real lives issues - working, raising families, going through tough times, etc.

There are no real complicated poses. Indeed, you don’t have to be flexible at all, you just focus on stretching yourself a little bit more each time (if you were a contortionist, then you’d not be doing Kundalini yoga because you wouldn’t have to provide any effort to achieve anything!.. ☺)

We usually have the choice of choosing the pace of our movements (as long as it follows the pace of our breath), and alternative poses are provided in case of chronic pain or injury.

**Benefits you could expect**

What KY mainly does is strengthening and balancing your whole body and especially your nervous and glandular systems, particularly the Pineal and Pituitary glands - our Master glands! It obviously also works on other systems too; lymphatic, respiratory, vascular, digestive, immune systems, vagus nerve, etc.

Scientific research has proven that yoga gives a better sense of well-being, calmness, confidence, vitality, focus, clarity of mind, inner peace, etc.

We progressively become more efficient, more confident, more patient, more aware of ourselves, more resilient to stress and more neutral to ‘negative’ events happening to us[[1]](#footnote-1).

From a yogic perspective, it helps in increasing and balancing Prana[[2]](#footnote-2) within the physical body (organs and anatomic systems), the emotional body (conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind), the subtle body (electro-magnetic field surrounding the body) and the energetic body (chakras).

As with all forms of yoga, its purpose is to raise your vibration and consciousness, so that you feel more centered, grounded, connected, clear, sharp and focused. The difference between KY and other forms of yoga is that it is said to achieve all of this way quicker, mainly because of its very precise and combined technologies.

**A brief history…**

It is said that Kundalini Yoga was originally used in India by the warrior class in the Sikh religion.
However, an examination of mystical literature and traditions showed that Kundalini, called by various names, seems to have been a universal phenomenon in esoteric teachings for perhaps three thousand years. Kundalini-type descriptions or experiences are found in esoteric teachings of the Egyptians, Tibetans, Chinese, some Native Americans, and Africa.

The Upanishads, the sacred scriptures of Hinduism that date back to the fifth century B.C., provided a written description of Kundalini, although the oral tradition dates back even further.
For thousands of years, this sacred science and technology was veiled in secrecy, passed along in the oral tradition from master to chosen disciple, with an emphasis on the transmutation of energy to higher consciousness.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Kundalini came quite late in the West, until Psychiatrist Carl G. Jung and others observed and researched on the Kundalini energy in the 1930’s.

The practice of Kundalini Yoga started to spread in the West with Yogi Bhajan in the late 1960’s, when he came to the US and decided to teach it publicly, challenging the age-old tradition of secrecy. The goal was to “*share these teachings to create a science of the Total Self… It is the birthright of every human being to be healthy, happy and holy*” (Yogi Bhajan).

Yogi Bhajan (1929-2004) was an Indian Kundalini teacher, certified at the age of 16 (he started training at 8!).

**What to expect in a class?**

Kundalini Yoga has a proper structure, but each class never feels the same!

Usually we start by tuning-in (brief chanting to open the class and center ourselves), then we do **breath exercises** (Pranayam) and/or a few **warm-ups & stretching** exercises to prepare our body and mind. After, we always do a **Kriya**, which is a complete set of exercises that achieve a specific effect (Cleansing, Healing, Strengthening or Balancing different parts of our body / mind, etc.), followed by a well-deserved **deep relaxation** (either in silence, or using gong, singing bowls or music). The relaxation is indeed quite important as it helps to properly distribute, crystallize & integrate the effects of the kriya. We finally go into **meditation**. Again, Kundalini yoga has thousands of them, also each having its own specific effect and using different techniques (breath, mantra, mudra, locks, movement, chanting, silent focus, etc.).

“Chanting” is another difference with other “regular” types of yoga, although chanting is not something we do constantly .It plays indeed an important role. There’s a science behind this too – The Science of Naad (i.e. Sound).

But once again, there’s nothing religious in it, and feel free to abstain from chanting if you don’t feel comfortable with it at first (which was my case initially, but then it has become one of my favorite practice thereafter!..)

What I personally like about Kundalini yoga is that it never feels the same! There are literally thousands of Kriyas and meditations to choose from and each class has a variety of tools and actions: we sometimes dance, jump, stay still, repeat rapidly movements or hold long poses, lie down, use different types of breath techniques, chant, relax, meditate, etc. It can be quite strenuous or more meditative. In brief, we never get bored!

**Tips for people willing to start the classes**

* It is important to come to the class without a full stomach.  Ideally do not eat for 2 hours before the class (it’s ok to drink water though).
* Wear comfortable clothes, made of natural fibre if possible.
* Bring a yoga mat and a cushion or yoga block if you’re not used sitting straight on the ground (if really difficult for you, most of the poses can be done sitting on a chair too). You can also bring a light blanket if you feel like covering during the deep relaxation.
* Bring water to drink.
* Refrain from taking any type or drugs before the class (including coffee or alcohol) or wearing strong perfume, as it could give you headaches during the session.
* During the class, cultivate the habit of going a little beyond your limit, but not to the point of injury. When you cannot continue an exercise, rest a moment while visualizing and keeping to the same breath pattern, and then resume.
* Tip on how to deal in case of pain: \*Muscle pain coming slowly while doing an exercise for a long time = no risk of injury, you can push yourself a little bit more!

\*Sharp pain coming quite suddenly = caution,

maybe slow down a bit (always keeping with the breath) or pause (visualizing precisely the muscles that were working while keeping up with the breath gives you more than half the benefits and that’s the technique Olympic athletes use!)

* Another useful tip is to try as much as possible to develop a conscious awareness and mindfulness during the practice.
* Yogis recommends wearing white and covering the head during yoga; only if you feel comfortable doing it! Not compulsory at all (and again not for religious reason).

**Disclaimer**

I invite you to check with your doctor if you have health issues / old injuries and please use care when determining your own ability to do the exercises, as instructors are there to always push you a little bit more during the exercises. If you have a doubt, please check with me and always let the teacher know of any chronic pain, health issues or past accidents.

But so that you know, Kundalini has very few difficult postures in its data bank.

Also please keep in mind that although yoga and Kundalini yoga have many health benefits, they are not ill-based treatments.

**ANNEX: BENEFITS OF KIRTAN KRIYA MEDITATION**

* ***On Alzheimer patients***

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dharma-singh-khalsa-md/meditation-alzheimers_b_3625181.html>

Recently The Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation (ARPF) presented a summary of a research at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Boston. For the past 12 years, 12-minute singing yoga meditation called Kirtan Kriya (KK). This work has specifically focused on reducing risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and the enhancement of total brain fitness.

Our studies utilized recognized methods to measure aspects of brain health and specialized scans such as SPECT and MRI, as well as sophisticated memory and blood tests, to determine the results of our studies.

I'd like to divide the outcome of our research into three categories: **mind, body, and spirit,** all of which optimize brain and body aging.

**A. Mind: Here are the ways practicing KK improves your mind and brain power.**

1. [Improved Memory](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20164557) can help reverse memory loss

2. [Reduced Stress](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15511597): Studies show cognitive decline caused by both acute and chronic stress secondary to the hormone cortisol's brain cell-killing effect in the memory center of your brain, the hippocampus.

3. [Enhanced Brain Blood Flow](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19773673) : increased in areas of their brain, including those influence attention, concentration, focus, memory (hippocampus), depression, trauma and resiliency.

5. [Improved Brain Chemistry](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15511597): KK, however, can help increase neurotransmitters in a more natural way than with drugs and improve communication between brain cells, thus enhancing brain and memory function.

**B. Body: Here are the ways KK improves your body all the way down to the level of your genes and DNA.**

6. [Increased telomerase](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22407663): Telomerase is the enzyme that controls the length of your telomeres, the cap of your DNA. Longer telomeres equal better health. Shorter telomeres equal Alzheimer's disease and accelerated aging and a shortened life. An increase of 44 percent in telomerase was shown in our study on highly stressed caregivers doing KK for 12 minutes a day for eight weeks. This is the largest increase in telomerase ever seen.

7. [Decrease in bad genes](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22795617): down regulation of inflammatory genes, which signifies a reduction in the activity of the genes that cause inflammation. This is important because inflammation is a hallmark of many illnesses, including Alzheimer's.

8. [Improvement of good genes](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22795617) including those that boost your immune system.

9. [Improved Sleep](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22454689): Sleep is critically important for optimal brain and body health. Disrupted sleep is a risk factor for Alzheimer's. KK can help improve sleep.

**C. Spirit: You have a spirit that impacts your health and well-being. KK touches your spirit in a positive way.** Here is how:

10. [Less depression](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22268968): 65 percent of subjects showed improvement on Depression Scales. Depression may be a risk factor for cognitive decline.

11. [Clarity of Purpose](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20808115): Meditators discover clarity of purpose and other aspects of psychological well-being such as acceptance, personal growth, and positive relationships.

12. [Spiritual Well-Being](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20570534): Practicing KK creates peace of mind and spiritual well-being

* ***On caregivers (a population with 50% having severe depression issues):***

https://bottomlineinc.com/health/stress/kirtan-kriya-meditation-12-minute-brain-boost-for-stressed-out-people

At the start of the study, all participants completed tests that assessed their level of depression…overall mental health…and cognitive functioning (attention, verbal memory, information-processing speed, etc).

They also had blood tests that measured the activity of *telomerase*, an enzyme responsible for maintaining *telomeres*. A telomere is the section at the end of each chromosome, and it helps protect the chromosome from damage. Studies suggest that telomeres and telomerase are affected by chronic stress and can be used as biomarkers of cellular aging—with shortened telomere length and reduced telomerase activity being linked to increased risk for various diseases and premature death.

Next, participants were randomly divided into two groups and instructed to practice their assigned stress-reducing technique for 12 minutes per day, at the same time each day, for a total of eight weeks.

***Group one:***  kirtan kriya meditation,

***Group two:*** These participants de-stressed in a basic way that many of us instinctively do—they listened to soothing instrumental music while relaxing in a quiet place with eyes closed.

After eight weeks, all the assessment tests were repeated. Basically, both stress-reducing techniques helped—but kirtan kriya helped much more. Here’s how participants fared with regard to…

***Depression:*** A 50% or greater improvement in depressive symptoms was seen in 65% of the kirtan kriya group—compared with just 31% of the basic relaxation group.

***Mental health:*** A 50% or greater improvement in overall mental health scores was experienced by 52% of participants in the kirtan kriya group…but by only 19% in the relaxation group.

***Cognitive function:*** The kirtan kriya group showed significant improvement on various tests of cognitive function…the relaxation group did not.

***Telomerase activity:*** Here was actual *physical proof* of kirtan kriya’s benefits, with the meditators showing a 43% improvement in telomerase activity—compared with only a 4% improvement in the relaxation group.

Other websites:

<http://www.alzheimersprevention.org/research/12-minute-memory-exercise>, <http://completewellbeing.com/article/kirtan-kriya-the-12-minute-miracle/>

<http://www.doctor-recommended-stress-relief.com/Kirtan-Kriya.html>

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1. http://upliftconnect.com/watch-science-behind-yoga/, but literally thousands of research papers available online [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. = Life Force Energy, or Qi or Chi… [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.thesecretsofyoga.com/kundalini/history-kundalini-yoga.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)