

# THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

## 1. *Yamas*: Restraints for Living Virtuously

- a. *Ahimsa*: non-violence and non-injury in thought, word and deed
- b. *Satya*: truthfulness in thought, word and deed
- c. *Bramacharya*: faithfulness / chastity (in later stages)
- d. *Asteya*: non-stealing, non-covetedness, lack of jealousy
- e. *Aparigraha*: non accepting of gifts or bribes

## 2. *Niyamas*: Observances or Disciplines

- a. *Saucha*: purity (external and internal)
- b. *Santosh*: contentment
- c. *Tapas*: austerity
- d. *Swadhyaya*: study of religious scriptures
- e. *Ishwara-pranidhana*: worship of the divine, surrender of ego

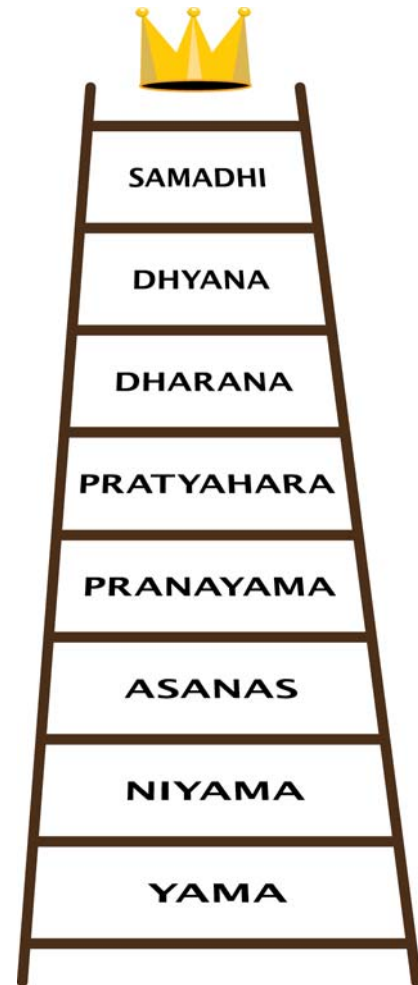
The Yamas and Niyamas are the moral codes of conduct: 1) for our interactions in the outside world, and 2) for our selves. Following them allows us to live in accordance with our true nature. They can also be described as ways to avoid suffering.

## 3. *Asana*: Steady Pose

The foundation of a spiritual practice is a healthy and strong body. Without a steady body, we can never have a steady mind. As we purify our bodies, we give our spirits a healthy place to reside.

## 4. *Pranayama*: Control of the Vital Energy

The stronger our nervous system, the more energy can flow through our body in an even and controlled way. Pranayama opens up energy passageways and strengthens the nervous system.



## **5. *Pratyahara*: Withdrawal of the Sense from Objects**

At this stage, we start 'disconnecting' from the five senses- sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing. This helps us eliminate distractions from the outside so that our minds can begin to focus.

## **6. *Dharana*: Concentration**

Here, we concentrate the mind upon either an external object or an internal idea (a mantra) in order to slow down and eventually stop thoughts. Chanting a mantra at the start of meditation is one useful technique. The mantra gives the mind a 'perch' to rest on so that it doesn't engage in thoughts that surface.

## **7. *Dhyana*: Meditation**

Once our minds become fully concentrated and free of thoughts, actual meditation begins. We exist in a flow of unbroken awareness of our true self (the divine). Outside perceptions and senses are completely shut down.

## **8. *Samadhi*: Super-Conscious State**

This state of being is sublime without description. In fact, the mind cannot grasp it at all because at this stage, our minds dissolve completely into our spirit. Time, space and causation are transcended. This is the state of mind that all living beings are moving towards...It is the ultimate goal of our existence.