



DEBUNKING YOGA MYTHS

BY KIT CAELSTO,
THE AUTISTIC YOGA TEACHER/CHICKEN YOGI
AUTISTICYOGATEACHER.COM





Yoga is for everyone!

When I polled neurodivergent people and asked them what their barriers to yoga was, the number one answer? They said they felt as if they didn't belong.

I've been there. Looking at the slick pictures of people in poses I couldn't even dream of attempting, I didn't feel as if I belonged either. But those images are just marketing, and **yoga is for everyone**. There are so many types and styles of yoga, including chair, bed, yin, and restorative yoga that don't rely on fancy headstands or balancing in impossible ways. And if that's your style of yoga--that's great too.

So let me begin by debunking the first myth. **You do belong. Yoga is for you; it's for me; it's for everyone in however they wish for it to show up in their lives.**

About Me



Hi! I'm Kit Caelsto, a 500-hour registered yoga teacher. I'm large bodied, multiply neurospicy, queer, transmasculine, and was diagnosed with fibromyalgia over 20 years ago. Trust me, if yoga could "cure" fibromyalgia or autism or ADHD or cPTSD or... well you get the picture.

And that's why I started **ChickenYogi.com**, because a) chickens are a special interest of mine and b) I wanted people to see that they belonged in yoga even if they lived on a rural homestead and well...looked like me!

Yoga is liberation. For me as the **autistic yoga teacher** it's all about neurodivergent liberation and loving your entire being. And part of that is feeling like you belong in your skin and in the room.



Myth #2: Yoga is a “Cure”

The second biggest reason why people said they don't pursue yoga is because they didn't like how it's marketed as a cure. **I completely agree!** I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in the early 2000s. The three main FDA approved meds didn't work for me (and I have thoughts about the reasons why), so I was told “try yoga”. Over twenty years later I'm not cured!

Yoga was really good at helping me with one thing though--feeling at home in my skin. Getting in touch with my body and listening to it. Okay, so that's three things, but all of it comes back to the liberation of self-love and self-acceptance.

I still have fibro flares, just like I have days when my brain just won't focus. You'll have those, too. I will never tell you that yoga will “fix” that, or anything. In fact, if you listen to my podcast, **The Chicken Yogi Show**, I talk a lot about the failings of a cure narrative and where it comes from.



(Minor infodump incoming)

You can blame Jung and Eliade for the medicalization of yoga. When Mircea Eliade went to India and learned yoga from one of the first “global gurus”, he came back and immediately shared it with Jung, who took it to an Eastern European psychology conference and that's where we get our western idea of yoga being a “cure” for everything. It's part of our western medical need to pathologize everything.



Myth #3: Not Flexible Enough

You do not have to be able to twist yourself into knots in order to do yoga. In fact, early yoga practitioners were called contortionist or acrobatics and with the rise of yoga in the early 1900s there were divisions between those who preferred more extreme poses and those who wanted yoga to be more accessible. **Flexibility is not a prerequisite to doing yoga.** (And if you're hypermobile stay tuned because I'll be talking about that, too.)

In fact, forcing your body into “deeper” stretches just to reach the “fullness of a pose” (as some instructors teach it), can cause pain or injury. Don't do it. Bend only as far as feels comfortable. In fact, for hypermobile individuals, stop before you get to the end of your range.

You will still get the benefit from yoga even if you're not stretching through your entire range of motion, and you'll be protecting your body and energy.

Yoga Tip

Try the 1-2-3 motion.

1. For your first step, only bend a little, perhaps 1/4 of your range.
2. If that feels good, then bend a bit more, perhaps 1/2 of the way.
3. Still good? Finish your stretch by ending before your full range of motion.



Myth #4: Not Enough Time

We all don't have the same 24 hours in every day. I'm not going to judge how you spend your time, nor am I going to fill you with false platitudes and toxic positivity. What I am going to do is let you know that you can do yoga in just a few minutes, and no I'm not talking about rushing through a sun salutation.

Rethink what you consider yoga.

Sitting and being aware of your breathing for a couple of breaths? That's yoga. Lifting your arms overhead while you're sitting at your desk? That's a seated upward salute. Even stretching for as little as five minutes is yoga.

My community classes run 20-30 minutes. Having videos between 10-20 minutes seems like a really good fit for me, my brain, and my Chicken Yogi Club. Private classes can run longer. I usually book 30-45 minutes, but if you want shorter private classes--reach out.

Honestly, that's one reason why I love virtual yoga classes. I can play those videos when it works for me! I don't have to rely on someone else's class schedule working for me, because there are days when I don't know what I'll be doing or can't plan ahead.

All community yoga classes are archived in the **Chicken Yogi Club** so you can watch them at any time.



Myth #5: Yoga Includes Spirituality

Modern yoga is based on the *Yoga Sutras* by Patanjali, and while there is a difference between modern postural yoga and modern meditative yoga, with the later having more spiritual content, there's no denying most classes include some aspect of yoga spirituality. Some instructors even think they have to include spirituality in a class to make it “real yoga”.

I think you understand by now that “real yoga“ is more about marketing than truth. If your focus is only on the asanas, or yoga postures, then you are in good company. While my personal practice includes spirituality, I respect that others don't want yoga spirituality as part of their asana practice. So here at Autistic Yoga Teacher, it's all about the practice of asanas. I'll keep the spirituality over on Chicken Yogi.



Myth #6: Virtual Yoga isn't the Same

Many people said they didn't want to be in a room with people either due to their own immune compromised system or in solidarity with others who are immune compromised. Some just don't want to be around a bunch of people. I understand all of this. So let me say this, **virtual yoga is a "real" yoga class.**

In a virtual class, I cannot touch you to help you with your poses (if you consented to hands-on adjustments or any adjustments at all), but that is the only difference.

Save the commute. Save the time. Be comfortable in what you wear. And do yoga from wherever you are.



A Note About Physical Health Conditions

One final note about physical health conditions including hypermobility. First off, you know your body better than anyone. I am NOT going to tell you that on every single day you can do yoga. There are things to look out for with a variety of health conditions, and you need a yoga instructor who understands this. That's why I encourage people to reach out and talk to me before booking a private yoga session (or even coming to a community class). If you have questions -- ask! My virtual door is open.

There are also a myriad of different styles and ways of doing yoga. Perhaps you could begin with chair yoga or restorative yoga. Maybe limiting the number of sitting or standing poses needs to happen. Yoga should always be a conversation between you and your body, never a demand by you to your body.

I know there are days when my body says nope, and I honor that. I encourage you to honor that when it comes up in your body, too. But if this is something you'd like to do, I also encourage you to keep looking, keep learning, and reach out if you feel comfortable doing so.



Ready to begin?

Join me for community classes at 10am on Wednesday or 2pm on Saturday at Chicken Yogi's pages on Facebook or YouTube. We'll be adding our Twitch.tv channel soon.

Facebook.com/ChickenYogi

YouTube.com/@ChickenYogi

Twitch.tv/ChickenYogi

Looking for on demand yoga videos as well as replays of the community classes? Join the Chicken Yogi Club. For about the cost of a fancy coffee you can have access to our vault, which is constantly growing. Check it out at <http://club.chickenyogi.com>

**If you'd also like to book private yoga sessions, check out
AutisticYogaTeacher.com**

Thanks so much for picking up this free guide. I hope you found it helpful. If you have questions, my virtual door is always open at kit@chickenyogi.com.

