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# health|happiness|you

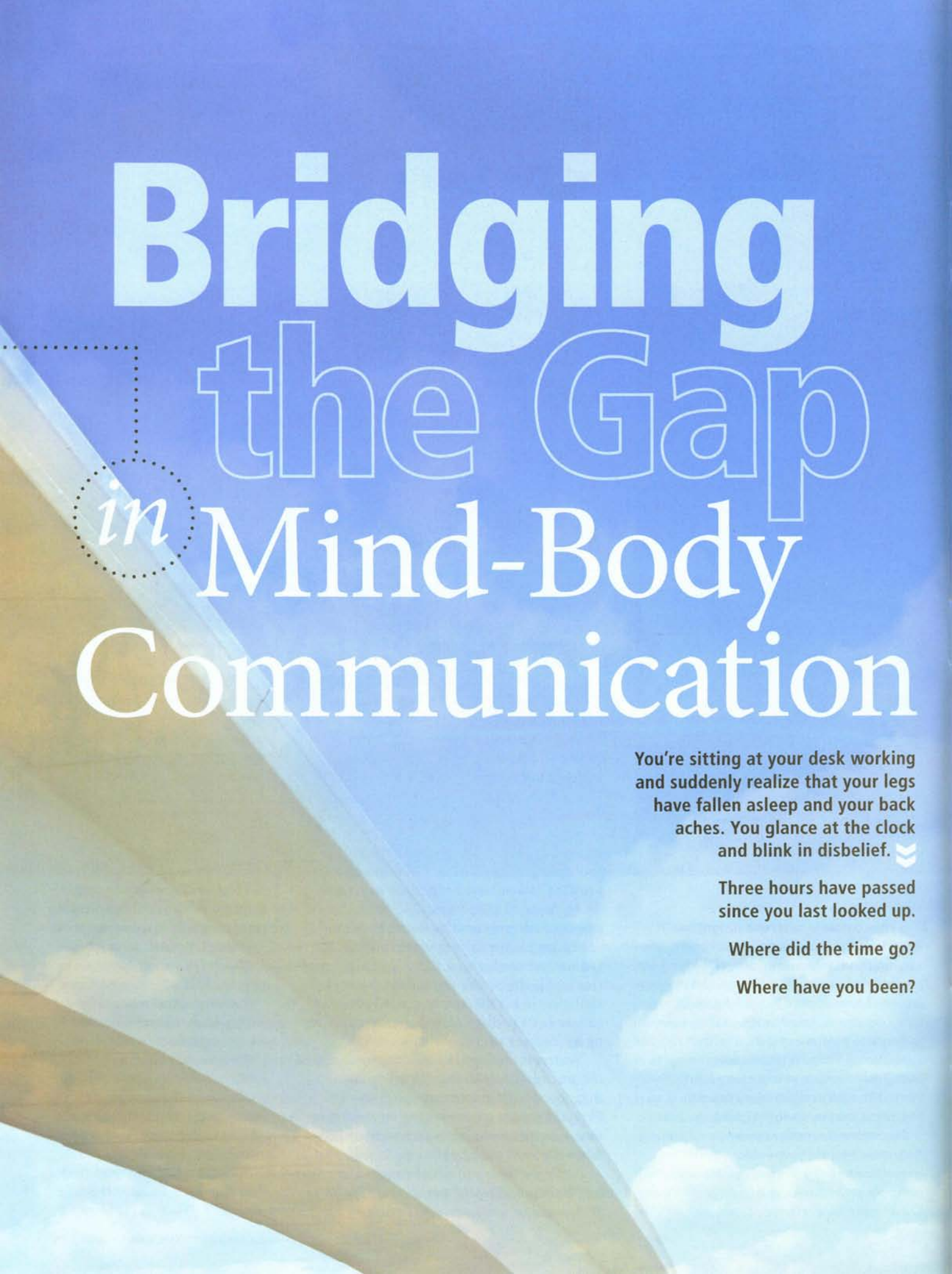
ARE YOU MAKING  
*the* **Mind-Body**  
CONNECTION?

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 **Central Florida  
REGIONAL HOSPITAL**



# Bridging the Gap *in* Mind-Body Communication

You're sitting at your desk working and suddenly realize that your legs have fallen asleep and your back aches. You glance at the clock and blink in disbelief. ❧

Three hours have passed since you last looked up.

Where did the time go?

Where have you been?

**WE'VE ALL** experienced a subtle loss of consciousness—a disconnection between mind and body. The good news is that there are also subtle ways to enhance our mind-body relationship for better health and well-being.

### Awaking to Wholeness

Perhaps no one is more familiar with repairing the distanced relationship between mind and body than Matthew Sanford, a living miracle who tests the margins of the mind-body connection. When Sanford was 13 years old, his family's car slid off an icy overpass in Iowa, killing his father and sister and leaving him paralyzed from the chest down.

"I learned to disconnect from my body. It was as though my injuries had injected silence into the relationship between my mind and my body," says Sanford. "Then, after years of dragging



my paralyzed body around and being unhappy, I realized that we can't overcome our bodies—we need to learn to live in them."

The feeling of wholeness that the accident took from Sanford was restored when he met Jo Zukovich, an Iyengar yoga practitioner who would become his teacher. When Zukovich led Sanford to sit on the floor with his legs forming a "V," he felt a hum of energy resonate throughout his entire

body. Simply sitting in a position he had not occupied for years was an emotional experience that made Sanford feel more connected to his body.

As a result of practicing yoga, Sanford began awaking to the subtle connections that exist in the silence between his mind and his body. He knows that those connections will never enable him to walk again, but they are crucial to making him feel whole. He now helps others as a yoga instructor; sought-after public speaker; founder of the nonprofit organization, Mind Body Solutions; and acclaimed author.

"I came to see silence as the space that helps us appreciate sensory experiences like watching a sunset—it's like feeling emptiness and fullness at the same time," says Sanford. "One (continued on page 14)

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### Body Language Decoded

Emotions are so powerful that they affect our health by producing physical responses to the way we think, feel and act. Be aware of these signs your body sends as signals that your emotional health might be out of balance:

- back pain
- chest pain (seek immediate medical attention)
- frequent headaches
- changes in appetite (or weight gain or loss)
- extreme, persistent fatigue
- shifts in sleeping patterns (such as insomnia or excessive sleepiness)
- sexual problems
- constipation or diarrhea
- dry mouth

In addition to being indicators of your emotional health status, some of these symptoms are indicative of serious medical conditions and may require a physician's care.

"Anxiety, grief, depression, physical pain and stress are factors we all feel at different times in our lives. They can disrupt our emotional health and potentially lead to a decline in physical health," says Kellie Kintz, MSW, LCSW, counselor for Psychosocial Services at JFK Medical Center in Atlantis, Fla. "Sometimes, the first step on the path to greater overall health is realizing that we don't need permission to ask for help."

*To find an HCA professional in your area who can evaluate your emotional health and help you develop a healthier mind-body connection, call the physician referral line at your h2u-affiliated hospital.*



## Bridging the Gap in Mind-Body Communication

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paradoxical insight that guides my life is that the silence within us both connects us to, and separates us from, the world."

### An Out-of-Body Culture

Sanford's experience illustrates that the need for mind-body integration isn't limited to people who experience trauma or physical limitations.

"Even though my case is more extreme, I realized when I started yoga



15 years ago that there really isn't much difference between someone in a wheelchair and someone who sits at a desk for eight hours a day—the effects are similar. We've

all been drawn out of a deep sense of connection with our bodies, and as we become increasingly out of tune with our bodies, we lose some of our connection with others," says Sanford. "What's the solution? Learning to feel present and grounded in our bodies—fully aware of all sensations—gives us a sense of freedom and improves our lives."

"Indeed, in our fast-paced society, we're all susceptible to being separated from our bodies in one sense or another by daily stimuli and the hustle and bustle of everyday life," says Sanford. "The message we get from society to impose our will over our physical bodies contributes further to this disconnect."



### The Softer Side of Exercise

"Good health rests on the three-legged stool of mind, body and soul," says Debi Pearson, exercise physiologist at MountainView Hospital in Las Vegas, Nev. "Integrating those three factors through exercise gives our lives balance and helps us maintain perspective against external stressors."

Here are three "om"-mazing ways to achieve a total-package workout routine:

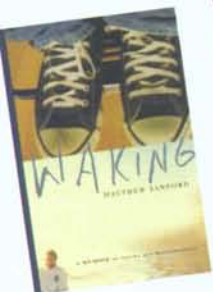
- 1 Be a poser.** A centuries-old Hindu discipline centered around training the consciousness for a state of spiritual insight and tranquility, yoga promotes control of the mind and body through a series of still poses. Yoga is easy to learn, requires little or no equipment and is great for individual or group sessions at home with DVDs, or in studios with an instructor. Yoga improves balance and flexibility, which increases your resistance to injury and soothes your soul, while toning your body.
- 2 Slow down.** Tai chi—a "soft style" Chinese martial art from the early 1800s known for its slow, deliberate movements and deep breathing—involves prolonged standing, which enhances balance. The basic training forms, also called "motion routines," are said to enhance health and longevity. No equipment is necessary, but beginners generally benefit from instruction at a gym or studio.
- 3 Feel the burn.** Pilates is a series of non-impact exercises designed by Joseph Pilates, who was born in Germany in 1880. This "lengthening and strengthening" regimen helps increase flexibility, balance, inner awareness and strength, without adding bulk. Pilates has varying degrees of difficulty; is appropriate for one-on-one sessions, class settings or at home with DVDs; and is more or less equipment-intensive, depending on your needs. Pilates may provide a less intense mind-body connection than with yoga or tai chi, due to its quicker pace.

Tap into your inner calm and tone your body with yoga, tai chi or Pilates through an h2u-affiliated hospital. Ask your local h2u director for information about classes in your area.

### Take Healing off the Shelf

Years after a car accident left him paralyzed from the chest down, Matthew Sanford, author of *WAKING: A Memoir of Trauma and Transcendence* (Rodale, June 2006), poignantly traces his journey from the intensive-care unit to the yoga classroom—first as a student and later as a teacher. Sanford brings the mind-body connection down to earth through candid glimpses of what it truly means to live in touch with your body. Pick up *WAKING* for a thought-provoking, uplifting reading experience.

Visit Sanford's Web sites at [www.matthewsanford.com](http://www.matthewsanford.com) and [www.mindbodysolutions-mn.org](http://www.mindbodysolutions-mn.org) for more information about *WAKING*, yoga instruction and public speaking engagements.



“Our culture tries to inflict mind over matter, but we need to integrate mind and body in a way that uses more than will,” says Sanford. “When we consider that there’s more to ourselves than we can feel directly, that the silence within us has depth and vitality, we get stronger physically, mentally and spiritually. This can have a wonderful effect. I’ve never seen anyone become more aware of his or her body without also becoming better-adjusted, happier and more compassionate.”

### Getting in Touch

As an inspirational public speaker, Sanford helps people live satisfying lives by offering practical insights about aging, stress and integrating a heightened awareness of the mind-body relationship into healthcare and rehabilitation models.

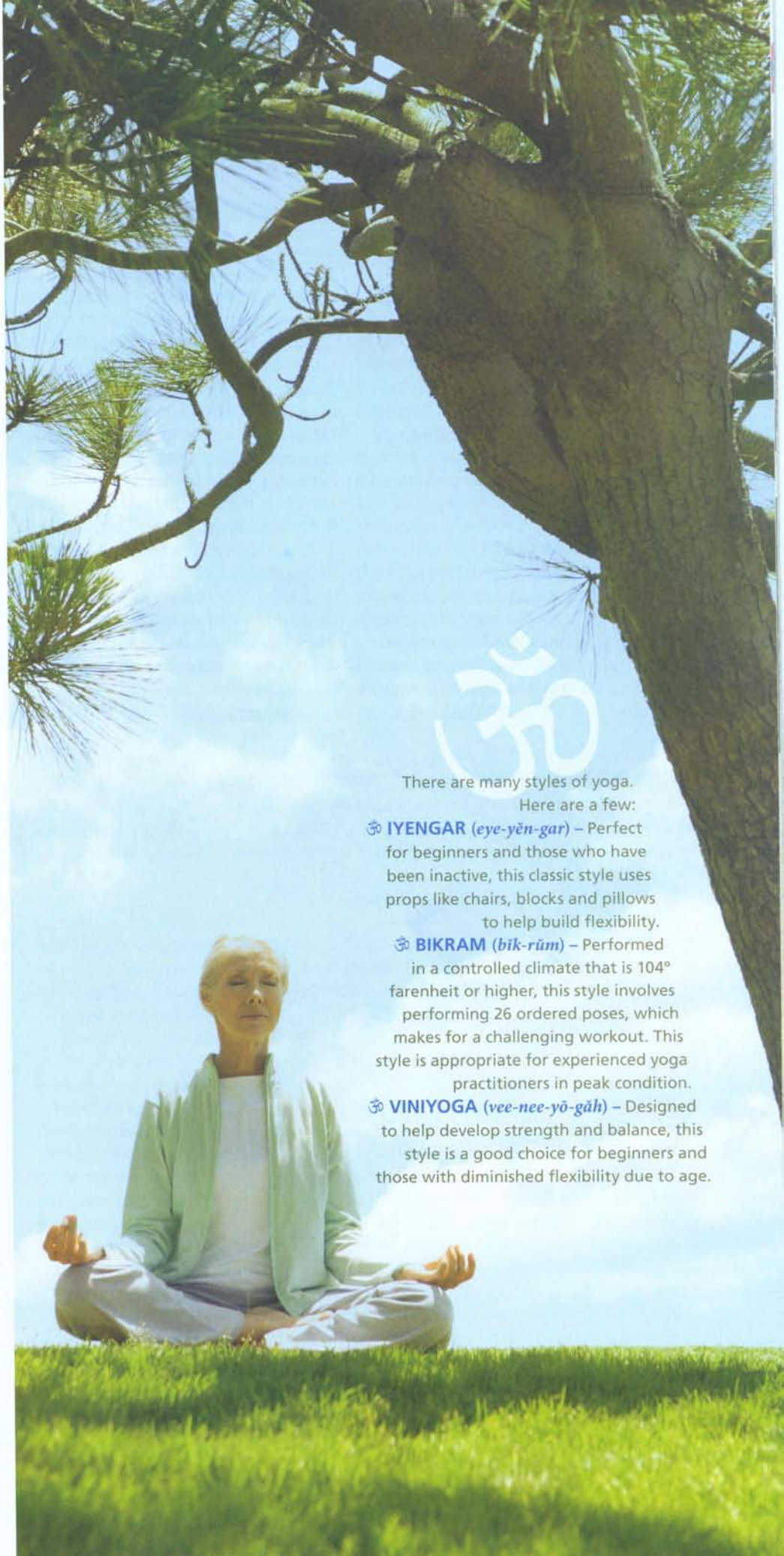
“The mind-body movement is about consciousness in general; it’s not just a personal health strategy,” says Sanford. “It’s encouraging that this movement is occurring everywhere in complementary healthcare therapies now—from acupuncture to massage therapy.”

Sanford’s ability to motivate listeners, readers and students stems from his knack for speaking about how to achieve and maintain a deepened mind-body relationship in remarkably clear and accessible ways.

“Some people think the mind-body concept is abstract and New Age, but at its core it’s profoundly simple: You have a mind and a body, and they work better together,” says Sanford, who urges even those who are physically unable to participate in yoga, tai chi or similar exercise classes to inhabit their bodies more fully by taking time to enjoy awe-inspiring sensations as simple as taking deep breaths.

“Even if you’ve suffered trauma, are experiencing chronic pain or feel the physical limitations that sometimes come with aging, your body is still the best home your mind will ever have,” says Sanford. “It’s important to seek out positive, nourishing experiences in your mind-body relationship.”

Visit [www.h2u.com](http://www.h2u.com) for practical tips on integrating mind and body through exercise and complementary therapies.



There are many styles of yoga.

Here are a few:

- ॐ **IYENGAR** (*eye-yên-gar*) – Perfect for beginners and those who have been inactive, this classic style uses props like chairs, blocks and pillows to help build flexibility.
- ॐ **BIKRAM** (*bik-rûm*) – Performed in a controlled climate that is 104° fahrenheit or higher, this style involves performing 26 ordered poses, which makes for a challenging workout. This style is appropriate for experienced yoga practitioners in peak condition.
- ॐ **VINIYOGA** (*vee-nee-yô-gâh*) – Designed to help develop strength and balance, this style is a good choice for beginners and those with diminished flexibility due to age.