

alternative therapies.” And yet she points out that TM, in particular, can have far-ranging beneficial effects on the whole physiology and life of a person, as no drug or surgical intervention can. If patients and caregivers can begin to use TM as a tool in the treatment of cardiovascular disease—the country’s number one killer—that will have a tremendous impact on the national health care system, she speculates. This simple technique, she says, has the potential to avoid risk and expense while saving lives. Changing the course of a disease with TM is possible, she says. “Now I want to make it probable.”

MARIAN GARFINKEL, Ed.D.

R_X: YOGA FOR JOINT TROUBLE

IN 1998, ON RETURNING from her annual study with B.K.S. Iyengar, senior Iyengar Yoga teacher Marian S. Garfinkel, Ed.D., found over 900 e-mail messages waiting. Everyone from CNN to nurses in Texas and individuals in Poland were trying to reach her. For, just as she departed for India, the November 11 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* had been released. In it was an article, with Garfinkel as the lead author, reporting on a study that set out to determine whether yoga postures based on the Iyengar method can relieve the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, that common ailment resulting from repetitive activities like typing. The study’s conclusion: Yes, indeed, it can.

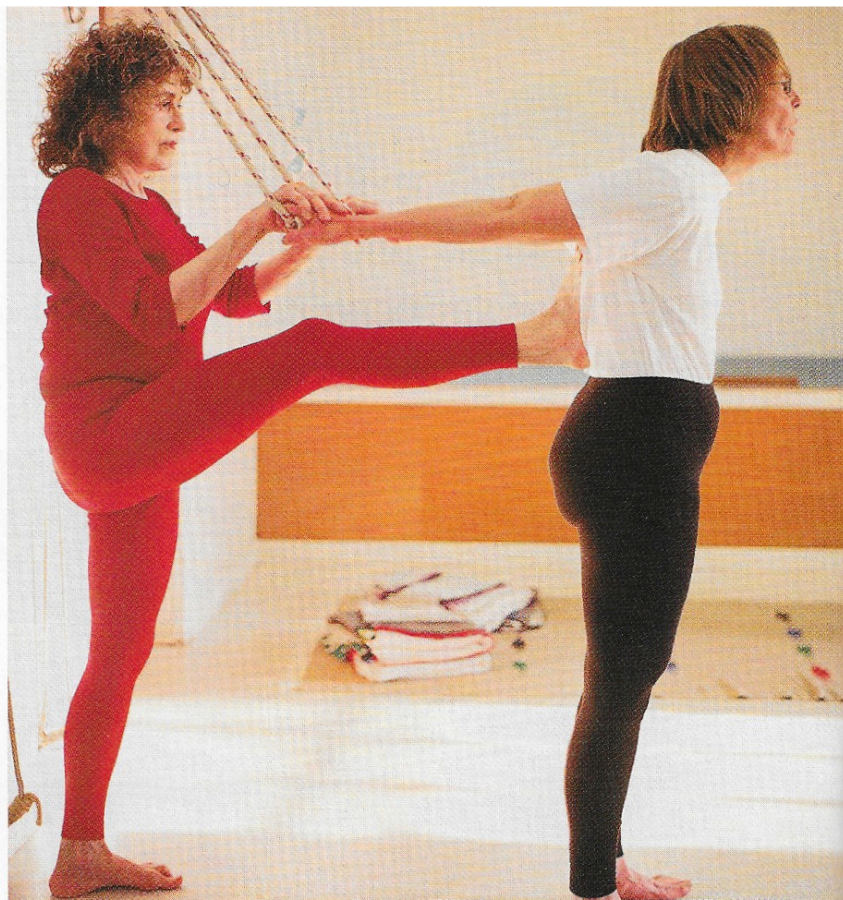
Trial subjects were recruited from a geriatric center and an industrial site; those who received yoga instruction twice a week from Garfinkel showed significant improvement in grip strength and suffered less pain than those who did not receive any yoga instruction. They also showed improvement on a nerve test used to measure the severity of carpal tunnel syndrome. Newspapers and television stations called Garfinkel to interview her about this surprising finding; health practitioners and individuals called to find out how they or their patients could relieve carpal tunnel symptoms with yoga.

Publication in that prestigious medical

journal was the culmination of three years’ work for Garfinkel—from getting the idea for the study, to designing the yoga intervention and lining up rheumatologists to help her, to finding grant money, and then submitting the article. Just as you don’t often see the word “yoga” in *JAMA*, you don’t see many Ed.D.s—Doctors of Education—writing *JAMA* articles. It is, after all, the leading journal for medical doctors. But Garfinkel is a

“can do” sort of person. And listening to her talk about what she has done and is doing can make you feel like a couch potato even if you don’t own a TV.

Besides her Ed.D. (from the Department of Health Education at Temple University, where she also received certificates in gerontology and stress management), Garfinkel also has a Master’s degree in English Literature and Theater from Penn State University. (The same



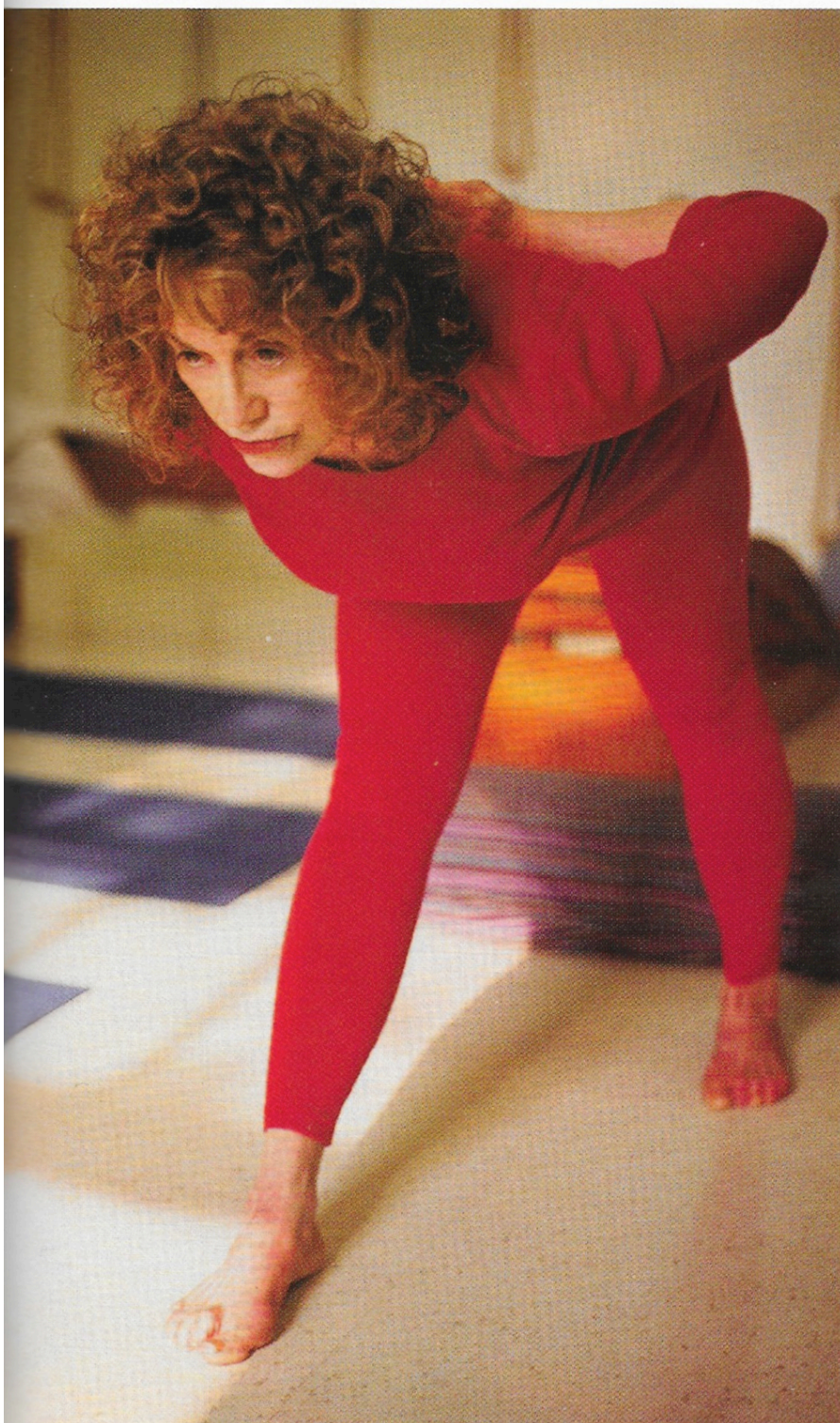
Health educator Marian Garfinkel, Ed.D., runs her own Iyengar Yoga studio in Philadelphia. She led a groundbreaking study which found that yoga can relieve the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome.

Photographs by Joshua Paul



In post-graduate research, Garfinkel affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania under rheumatologist H. Ralph Schumacher, Jr., M.D., who mentored her study on carpal tunnel syndrome.

“To help someone have less pain,” she says, “is a real act of grace.”

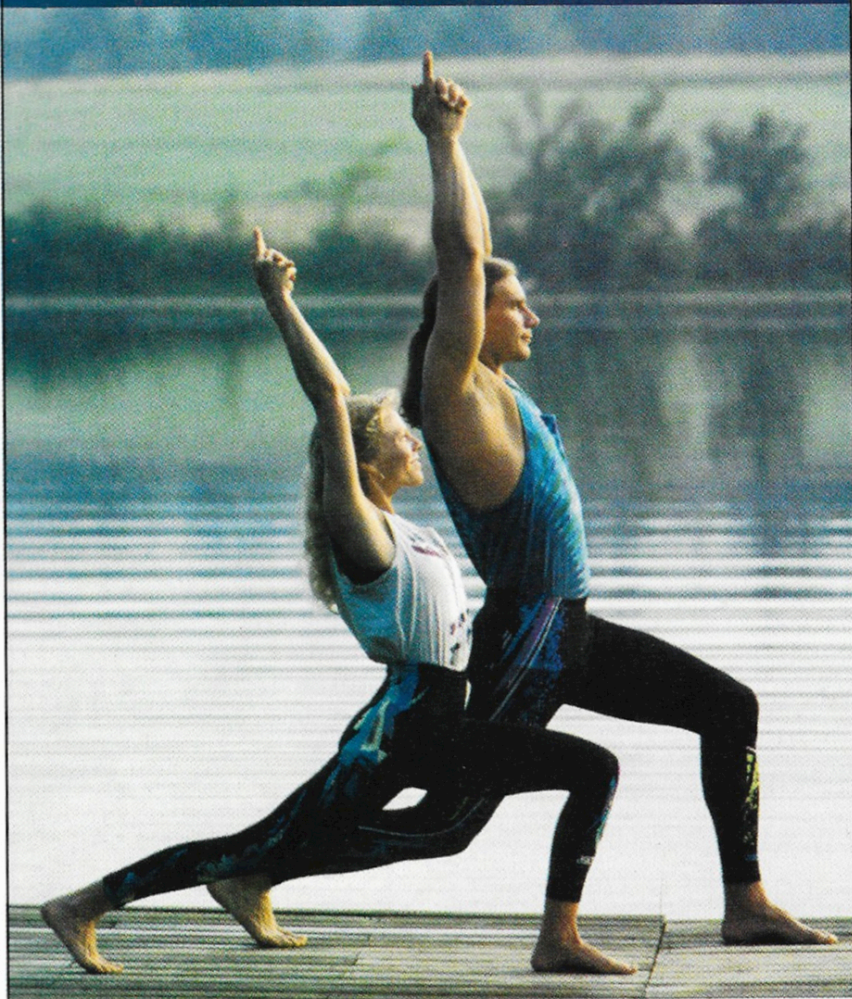


Marian Garfinkel who surfaced in *JAMA* wrote her master's thesis on “The Fascist Tendencies of William Butler Yeats.” She also studied art appreciation at the Barnes Foundation, collects fine art, and has long been part of the Philadelphia art scene. And that's not all; Garfinkel also serves on the board of the *American Poetry Review* and is a member of the Fine Arts Committee at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia. In her capacity as a health educator, she presents lectures and workshops on pain management, prevention, and treatment of arthritic disease and repetitive stress injuries, and teaches at the School of Nursing Education at MCP-Hahnemann University (also in Philadelphia). In her, um, spare time, she sings and loves to throw parties — not backyard barbecues but fundraising galas for hundreds of people at a time. She's even organized Philadelphia garden tours to raise money for arthritis research.

Then, of course, there's yoga, her first love. She discovered yoga in the late '60s and soon found herself teaching. In 1973, an Indian friend gave her a gift: a signed copy of B.K.S. Iyengar's book *Light on Yoga* (Schocken, 1995). It presented a yoga unlike any that Garfinkel had known, and it both fascinated and scared her. No one taught Iyengar Yoga in Philadelphia then, and she could see that this yoga would require hard work, time, and practice. So, despite her responsibilities in Philadelphia, including a preschool-age son, she jumped at a chance in 1974 to meet Iyengar when she found he would be doing a workshop in Ann Arbor, Michigan. When, the evening before classes were to begin, she was introduced to him, he asked: “How can I help you?” She told him of coming to own a copy of his book,

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and said she'd like help with her Headstand. The next morning, Iyengar, red Brahmin stripe on his forehead, entered the hall where about 40 students were warming up in front of 100 or so observers. Garfinkel remembers that "he looked formidable, terrifying"—nothing like the mild-mannered gentleman she'd met the night before.

He disrobed, jumped up on a table, called the class to order, and commanded, "Tadasana." He moved directly to Garfinkel, tapped her on the shoulder and barked: "You want to stand on your head, and you don't even know how to stand on your feet!" Four hours later Garfinkel hobbled out thinking, "I know nothing. How can I ever teach again after being around him?"

Iyengar told the author, "You want to stand on your head, and you don't even know how to stand on your feet!"

Nonetheless, in 1974 she began her annual treks to India to study, and with each visit her commitment to Iyengar Yoga has deepened. She's had two different Iyengar Yoga studios, including her current one in downtown Philadelphia, where she teaches eight classes a week. And she's now a trainer and assessor for Iyengar Yoga teacher certification.

In the early '90s, while getting her doctorate, she began realizing her dream to use yoga to "make a contribution." For her doctoral dissertation she conducted a field study looking at the effects of yoga on osteoarthritis of the hands and finger joints, which was published in the *Journal of Rheumatology*.

In post-graduate research, Garfinkel affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania under rheumatologist H. Ralph Schumacher, Jr., M.D., who mentored her study on carpal tunnel syndrome. "To help someone have less pain," she says, "is a real act of grace."

Her long-term hope is that Iyengar

Yoga will become an accepted complementary medicine, and she's doing her part to move it along. She's now designing a study for osteoarthritis of the knee (again as a researcher under Schumacher at the University of Pennsylvania), and hopes to continue doing research and teaching yoga classes for patients with repetitive strain injuries (RSIs).

That's a show she'd like to take on the road, traveling to patients and health practitioners around the world, spreading the "very powerful art" of yoga.

Meantime, her life stays in high gear: She's writing a book with another research physician from the University of Pennsylvania on RSIs, which will include yoga as a treatment. She's continuing to lecture, teach, and present workshops on occupation-related health problems, to run her own studio and, most important, to practice. "From one's own practice," she says, "comes the greatest knowledge."

P. K. VEDANTHAN, M.D.

INTEGRATING EAST AND WEST
THE DOUBLE-BLIND STUDY is highly revered in mainstream medical research. In these classic studies, scientists divide subjects into two groups: One gets the treatment being tested (say, a new drug), the other gets a placebo (a little sugar pill

There are both benefits and drawbacks to doing research on yoga in Western culture. Some people in the United States think that when you bring up yoga you're trying to inculcate Hinduism.

that looks just like the real one), and neither the patients nor the testers know who got what until the results are in. Under this model, studies testing yoga's effectiveness would have one group practicing yoga and the other...fake yoga?

"I don't know how to do sham yoga," says P. K. Vedanthan, M.D., of the North-

ern Colorado Allergy and Asthma Clinic in Fort Collins, Colorado. Nor does anyone else, which presents a problem for serious yoga researchers. Still, Vedanthan has been able to conduct and publish a single-blind study with some encouraging results for asthma sufferers.

His project divided adult asthmatics into two groups. Both kept daily diaries of their symptoms, medications, and peak flow readings. In addition, one group was given three 45-minute yoga classes a week, involving asanas, pranayama, and meditation.

All the patients then filled out weekly symptom questionnaires, and were tested for pulmonary function and examined regularly by investigating physicians, who didn't know which patients were doing yoga (thus, the "single-blind"-ness of the study).

At the end of four months, the yoga group reported significantly more relaxation and a more positive attitude—and

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