

yoga journal

# decompression CHALLENGE

Weave wellness and ancient philosophy into your practice with this special deep dive into the 8 Limbs of Yoga.

PRESENTED BY





In times of uncertainty, we often find ourselves overwhelmed, flooded with emotions, and bogged down by heightened feelings of stress and anxiety. It's natural to slip back into the familiarity of old habits, even when we know that they no longer serve us. Stress and negativity are an inevitable part of life, but you can develop a foundation of self-care with this nourishing routine.

# LIMB 1 YAMA

Yamas—sometimes translated as “self-restraint”—refer to the first limb of yoga. The 5 Yamas focus on our ethical standards and sense of integrity. More specifically, they focus on our behavior and how we conduct ourselves in life and in relation to others. Yamas are universal practices and function similar to what is commonly known as the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

In order to truly begin decompression, we need to look at our behaviors and how our personal values come into play in our lives. Are they hindering our ability to find ease or enhancing it?

Are you placing your values above others or are you letting the values and behaviors of others overshadow your own? Once you’re able to assess how these 5 Yamas are presenting themselves in your life, you can start to create balance and begin finding support within.

## Practice

### Ground Yourself Through Meditation

*How to meditate even  
if you can't sit still*

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## LIMB 2 NIYAMA

Self-discipline: Refers to the second pillar of moral and ethical principles outlined by the 8 Limbs. The 5 Niyamas are observances that yogis take on to optimize their practice. While the Yamas are the moral and ethical guidelines for ideal social conduct and relationships with others, Niyamas provide the same framework for how to treat ourselves.

*Practice*

**Fall in Love  
with Yourself First**  
*How to curb the jitters  
before a date*

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## LIMB 3 ASANA

Asanas, or poses, were developed to help yogis find discipline and build the foundation for meditation and stillness. These poses serve as a mirror for our innermost thoughts, patterns and behaviors. Asana is essential to active engagement with the limbs of yoga because it creates a healthy, strong, and flexible body that opens the gateways to accessing the last five limbs of yoga.



*Practice*

**Brazilian-Jiu-Jitsu-  
inspired Poses**

*A sequence to find  
steadiness and comfort*

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# LIMB 4 PRANAYAMA

Pranayama—the formal practice of controlling the breath, lies at the heart of yoga. It has a mysterious power to soothe and revitalize a tired body, a flagging spirit, a wild mind. The ancient sages taught that prana—the vital force circulating through us—can be cultivated and channeled through a panoply of breathing exercises. In the process, the mind is calmed, rejuvenated, and uplifted. Pranayama serves as an important bridge between the outward, active practice of yoga—like asana—and the internal surrendering practices that lead us into deeper states of meditation.

*Practice*

Ujjayi—  
a beginner-friendly  
springboard for  
all other pranayama

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# LIMB 5 PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara, is a Sanskrit word that means “to hold back” and denotes the fifth limb of yoga. Simply put, the practice requires you to detach your normal outwardly directed awareness from the world around you, retract it, and redirect it inward toward the self. The result of such efforts is that the senses—your sight, hearing, taste, etc. which trot along behind awareness like loyal dogs—naturally turn away from the world too. This effectively cuts you off from distraction in your environment, collects your usually scattered awareness, and prepares you for the sixth and seventh limbs of classical practice. In a world of information overload, Pratyahara offers us a haven of silence—a space for rejuvenation.



Practice

**Learn to Withdraw  
From Stimulus**

*Decompress now with  
these simple strategies*

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## LIMB 6 DHARANA

Dharana, the 6th limb of yoga, is essentially the second phase of a meditation practice. Now that you've rid yourself of external distractions, you can concentrate on your inner thoughts, feelings, and experiences. For the next two weeks incorporate the practice of Drishti, a yogic technique with which to develop single-pointed concentration of attention into your daily asana practice.



*Practice*

**Deepen Concentration  
Through Focus  
and Observation**

*Exploring Dharana*

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## LIMB 7 DHYANA

Our understanding of Dhyana, the 7th limb of yoga, moves beyond meditation—as Krishnamurti said “meditation is choiceless awareness.” When we’re in a complete flow-state, we’re experiencing the teachings of yoga without aims rooted in a desire to control but rather centered in the power of the present and acceptance of what is. This is where many masters describe the process of observing the observer (yourself) as you experience thoughts or feelings. Through the focused attention of meditation you can achieve total awareness.

### Practice

Attune to a State of  
**Being, Not Doing**  
*The Art of Being*

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# LIMB 8 SAMADHI

Samadhi means to bring together or to collect—another translation is bliss, or enlightenment. This is the ultimate state of being that few people reach, and often only after a lifetime (or many) of dedicated practice. Like Dhyana, Samadhi is a limb that comes to us more as a gift, oftentimes in part from our cultivation of the other six limbs.

We'll explore this state of ecstasy and focus on practices that bring us calm and joy.

## Practice

**Deepen Your Relationship  
by Focusing on Finding  
Bliss in the Mundane**

*Deconditioning Samadhi  
through experiences*

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