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Want a better yoga experience? Drop your expectations. If you could approach your yoga practice without any expectations at all, that would be perfect. However, that's impossible for most of us. Do the best you can: breathe, relax, and be present. Your life will change. These eleven tips will help. 1. Take a Yoga Class, and Get There Early. Want to learn yoga? Take a yoga class. Yes, you can learn from videos and books, but you'll feel much more confident, and will get more out of your practice, if you take a class. Your yoga teacher can help you to understand your body's responses to the asanas (postures). Talk to your teacher before you sign up for a class, and don't be insulted if your teacher suggests a beginners' class. Most importantly, get to class early. You can get a good position, and can stretch and warm up before the class begins. 2. Respect Yourself and Your Own Experiences in Your Yoga Practice. Yoga isn't just a series of exercises, nor is it a competitive sport. Yoga is union: - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, meaning "to yoke" or "to unite". We practice yoga to unite the body, breath, mind, and heart... The Yoga Sutras say, "Yoga is the ability to direct the mind without distraction or interruption." Another interpretation is that yoga means to be in harmony with a higher power, the universe, or your highest self. - Bend and Bloom Yoga Most importantly, yoga is experiential — no one can tell you what to experience. Your experiences are your own, and you won't be able to put them into words. Indeed, you'll realize that words aren't necessary. 3. Go Within: Accept and Listen to What Your Body's Telling You. We assume that our mind is separate from our body. However, neuroscientist Candace Pert, in her ground-breaking book Molecules of Emotion, suggested that your mind lives in every cell of your body. Yoga will show you that this is true. Yoga makes you comfortable in your body. You'll be more relaxed, more confident, and your life will improve. Indeed, after practicing yoga for a while, your life may change in ways you don't expect. You'll discover who you are. All you have to do is listen to your body as you do yoga. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - 4. Be Present: Turn Off Your Phone, and Inhabit Your Body. To truly listen to your body, you need to be present. Be aware of your body. Turn off your phone. Relax into each asana, and stop struggling. Breathe. 5. Accept Joy: Smile, Within and Without. Smile. Your mind and body are united. When you smile, you'll become joyful. Try it. Smile as you do your yoga practice. You'll learn to trust the joy you feel. Your friends will notice that you're happier. Who knew that a smile could make such a difference? 6. Your Breath Is Everything: Breathe Into the Tightness in Your Body. Your breath is your life. You can't live for more than a few minutes without breathing. As you relax, and your body releases tension and toxins, you'll be able to breathe more deeply. Use your breath. Direct your breath into the tight areas in your body. As your body becomes more flexible, so will your mind. 7. You're You: No Judgments or Comparisons. You'll find yourself making comparisons between your own body and those of the other people in your yoga class. You'll want to be as calm and serene as one person, and as flexible as another. You may feel superior — or envious. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - Whenever you feel yourself drifting into a day dream about other students in your class, or about what you have or don't have in your life, gently bring yourself back to your breath, and breathe into your body. 8. Do Your Homework: Practice Gentle Yoga. Stretches at Home — And in the Office. You may take a yoga class once or twice a week. You'll benefit most if you also do some yoga stretches at home. Speak to your teacher. Ask them what asanas they recommend for your home practice. Perhaps they'll ask you to do a round or two of Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations) each day. Surya Namaskar is a popular dynamic sequence of asanas, which is reputedly over 2,500 years old. It includes eight basic postures. You can do the entire sequence dynamically, as a flow of postures, or you can take a minute or two with each posture, if you have more time. Do some stretches in the office too. Several minutes of yoga will both energize you, and relax you. 9. Invest in Yoga and Meditation Accessories: They Help. Mats, belts, cushions, blocks — which yoga and meditation accessories do you need? You're unlikely to need any as a new student. Be guided by your teacher. Before you use items like a belt, or blocks, ask your teacher which postures you should use them in. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - As your practice deepens, and you're more familiar with your body, you'll understand how and when to use accessories. 10. Accept Your Emotions: Smile, or Cry. No One Will Judge You. Emotional breakthroughs are common in yoga. Yoga releases emotions that are buried in your body. The first time another student bursts into tears during practice, you'll be startled. If you're the person who's emotional, you may feel as if there's something wrong with you. There's nothing wrong. Accept whatever happens. 11. Have Fun: Wear Comfortable Yoga Clothes, and Relax. You'll quickly come to look on yoga class, and your daily practice of yoga at home and in the office, as the best part of your day. Expectations will arise. Forget them, and just relax into the postures. Yoga does its magic subtly and powerfully. All you need to do is enjoy it. Wear comfortable clothes, and if you're practicing in your office, close the door and take off your shoes. Use these tips for a better yoga experience. Yoga will subtly transform every area of your life, unlocking the person you are as it unites your body, mind and spirit. Featured photo credit: Rance Costa via Photopin - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - There are over a million business books listed on Amazon.com and a few of them are actually worth reading! Among those few are 30 books that build the foundation for success, whether you're working for yourself or somebody else. Note: After much thought, I excluded the following three genres from this list: Biographies. Delving into the personal lives of celebrated businessfolk (e.g., Steve Jobs) is usually just gossip writ large. Case Studies. Books that spotlight individual companies (e.g., Jack Welch and the G.E. Way) are so specific that not much useful can be gleaned from them. Business Strategy. Unless you're planning to run a Fortune 500 company by the time you're 30, such books (e.g., Good to Great) are a waste of your time. Regular readers of this column will see many books below that I've recommended in the past. That's because I truly believe that they're fundamental to success. So with no further ado, here are the must-reads: The most important person in your business life is yourself. These books teach you how to manage your thoughts and emotions to create the potential for success. Why it's a must-read: Destroys any thoughts you might harbor about being helpless and puts you in control of your destiny. Quick Quote: "The dreamers are the saviors of the world. As the visible world is sustained by the invisible, so men, through all their trials and sins and sordid vocations, are nourished by the beautiful visions of their solitary dreamers." Why it's a must-read: Most personal development books deal with your thoughts and emotions. This one brings in your body and its relationship with both. (BTW, this book was directly responsible for me leaving my corporate job and starting my own business.) Quick Quote: "If you can't, you must. If you must, you can." Why it's a must-read: Explains that motivation comes not from reward and punishment but from your own inner sense of your purpose in life. Quick Quote: "For artists, scientists, inventors, schoolchildren, and the rest of us, intrinsic motivation—the drive to do something because it is interesting, challenging, and absorbing—is essential for high levels of creativity." Why it's a must-read: Fear is what keeps you from taking the risks you'll need to take in order to be successful. This book explains how to transcend your fear. Quick Quote: "By reeducating the mind, you can accept fear as simply a fact of life rather than a barrier to success." Why it's a must-read: Teaches how to treat people in a positive and enlightened manner so that they're drawn to seek out and enjoy your presence. Quick Quote: "The unvarnished truth is that almost all the people you meet feel themselves superior to you in some way, and a sure way to let their hearts is to let them realize in some subtle way that you recognize their importance, and recognize it sincerely." Why it's a must-read: Provides a roadmap for making yourself not just more effective, but a better person overall. Quick Quote: "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." Your first decade in business is about discovery. These books help you figure out what you enjoy doing and then find a job that helps you enjoy it. Author: Robert T. Kiyosaki Why it's a must-read: Teaches the basics of personal finance and explains why building and owning businesses is the most reliable way to gain wealth. Quick Quote: "Mankind is divided into rich and poor, into property owners and exploited, and to abstract oneself from this fundamental division and from the antagonism between poor and rich means abstracting oneself from fundamental facts." Why it's a must-read: Obliterates the notion that working long hours is necessary to achieve success. Quick Quote: "Alternating periods of activity and rest is necessary to survive, let alone thrive. Capacity, interest, and mental endurance all wax and wane. Plan accordingly." Author: Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson Why it's a must-read: If you're promoted to management, this book provides the basic skills you need. If you're working for a manager, this book helps you understand what he or she is going through. Quick Quote: "If you can't tell me what you'd like to be happening, you don't have a problem yet. You're just complaining. A problem only exists if there is a difference between what is actually happening and what you desire to be happening." Why it's a must-read: While the writing is a trifle corny, this book explains the basics of managing your money, regardless of where and how you make it. Quick Quote: "Budget thy expenses that thou mayest have coins to pay for thy necessities, to pay for thy enjoyments and to gratify thy worthwhile desires without spending more than nine-tenths of thy earnings." Why it's a must-read: While the writing is quaint and a little bit cheesy, this book explains the thought process behind success in business and finance. Quick Quote: "All the breaks you need in life wait within your imagination. Imagination is the workshop of your mind, capable of turning mind energy into accomplishment and wealth." Author: Richard N. Bolles Why it's a must-read: This constantly updated guide helps you understand how to find the right job for you. This book has been a classic for decades because, well, it works. Quick Quote: "He or she who gets hired is not necessarily the one who can do that job best; but, the one who knows the most about how to get hired." In most cases, you'll want to work inside somebody else's company before you start your own. These books teach you how to survive and thrive in the workplace. Authors: Mike Phipps and Colin Gautrey Why it's a must-read: Explains how to thwart bosses and co-workers trying to manipulate you into doing things contrary to your own interests. Absolutely essential reading. Quick Quote: "Dirty tricks are more than just a career-threatening nuisance; they also form part of the political backdrop to all the great recent organizational scandals." Author: Geoffrey James (me) Why it's a must-read: Readers and reviewers have repeatedly told me that this book of "how-to" secrets is the perfect handbook for people just entering the corporate world. Quick Quote: "Beyond your own area of expertise, all you need to both survive and thrive in the business world is a handful of secrets and shortcuts." Why it's a must-read: Explains how to understand and read the various metrics in the business world, as well as how they can be distorted to fit other people's agendas. Also, it is on Bill Gates's summer reading list. Quick Quote: "The secret language of statistics, so appealing in a fact-minded culture, is employed to sensationalize, inflate, confuse, and oversimplify." Why it's a must-read: Looks into the very soul of the business world and captures the bloated absurdity of much that takes place there. Also contains lots of funny cartoons. Quick Quote: "We're a planet of nearly 6 billion ninnies living in a civilization that was created by a few thousand amazingly smart deviants." Authors: William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White Why it's a must-read: Teaches you how to be a better writer, regardless of whether you're writing documents, emails, texts, or tweets. Quick Quote: "A single overstatement, wherever or however it occurs, diminishes the whole, and a carefree superlative has the power to destroy, for the reader, the object of the writer's enthusiasm." Why it's a must-read: Explains how to cope with the endless series of disruptive innovations that periodically shake up the corporate world. Quick Quote: "What you are afraid of is never as bad as what you imagine. The fear you let build up in your mind is worse than the situation that actually exists." Since you're reading this on Inc.com, you're probably thinking of starting your own business. These books will help you launch a successful one. Author: Jay Conrad Levinson Why it's a must-read: The basics of marketing rolled up into a single, easily readable book. This is the practical approach that you won't and can't learn in business school. Quick Quote: "Every little thing you do and show and say—not only your advertising and your Web site—is going to affect people's perceptions of you." Author: Robert B. Cialdini Why it's a must-read: Explains the psychology of how to get people to follow your lead without forcing them to do so. This book is a little like nuclear energy, though, in the sense it can be both used and abused. Quick Quote: "There is a group of people who know very well where the weapons of automatic influence lie and employ them regularly and expertly to get what they want. They go from social encounter to social encounter requesting others to comply with their wishes; their frequency of success is dazzling." Why it's a must-read: Explains how to create products (and marketing messages) that draw consumers into your story, rather than the usual approach, which is to scream until you get the consumer's irritated attention. Quick Quote: "Every day, you're exposed to more than four hours of media. Most of it is optimized to interrupt what you're doing. And it's getting increasingly harder and harder to find a little peace and quiet. The ironic thing is that marketers have responded to this problem with the single worst cure possible. To deal with the clutter and diminished effect of Interruption Marketing, they're interrupting us even more!" Author: Eric Tyson and Jim Schell Why it's a must-read: If you watch enough episodes of Shark Tank, you start thinking that being an entrepreneur means winning a reality show lottery. This book shows you that starting your own business isn't a high-risk play; it's simply how you create a better life for yourself. Quick Quote: "The vast majority of small-business owners we know provide products or services quite similar to what's already in the marketplace and make reasonable but not extraordinary sums of money—and, thanks largely to the independence that small-business ownership offers, are perfectly happy doing so!" Why it's a must-read: It's impossible to be successful in business without selling yourself, your services, your ideas, and your products. This book helps you reach the point where you can sell naturally, positively, and without any feelings of guilt. Quick Quote: "I will live this day as if it is my last. This day is all I have and these hours are now my eternity. I greet this sunrise with cries of joy as a prisoner who is deprived from death. I lift mine arms with thanks for this priceless gift of a new day." Why it's a must-read: The ultimate in step-by-step, actionable advice for every stage of building your business. If you read only one book in your career as an entrepreneur, this should be it. Quick Quote: "Remember, few things are right or wrong in entrepreneurship—there's only what works and what doesn't work." Finding your place in the world also means understanding the world itself. While some of these aren't traditionally thought of as business books, they all put your work and life into proper perspective. Why it's a must-read: You can't possibly understand the big picture if you're focused on the day-to-day hassles of life. This book lets you take command of the little things so that you think bigger. Quick Quote: "Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness." Why it's a must-read: If we were born after 1985, this book will explain why the world is so screwed up and what you might do to change it. Quick Quote: "A bus with the 85 richest people in the world on it would contain more wealth than the collective assets of half the earth's population—that's three and a half billion people." Author: Yuval Noah Harari Why it's a must-read: This brief history of humankind debunks the myth of endless progress by putting our civilization into the context of our evolutionary development. It's the ultimate "big picture" book. Quick Quote: "Homo sapiens conquered the world thanks above all to its unique language." Why it's a must-read: After Pausanias diagnosed with terminal cancer, he gave this lecture, which was entitled "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams." The YouTube video of the lecture has been viewed 17 million times. This book deepens the experience. Quick Quote: "Time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think." Why it's a must-read: Probably the biggest big picture question of all time is "how do we know what's true." This book answers that question without resorting to superstitious mumbo-jumbo. Also, it is on Bill Gates's summer reading list. Quick Quote: "We should always be open-minded, but the only good reason to believe that something exists is if there is real evidence that it does." Why it's a must-read: The internet has generated an exponential increase in the amount of mental horse manure floating around in people's brains. This book vaccinates you against it. Quick Quote: "There is a popular notion that skeptics are closed-minded. Some even call us cynics. In principle, skeptics are not closed-minded or cynical. A skeptic is one who questions the validity of a particular claim by calling for evidence to prove or disprove it."



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