

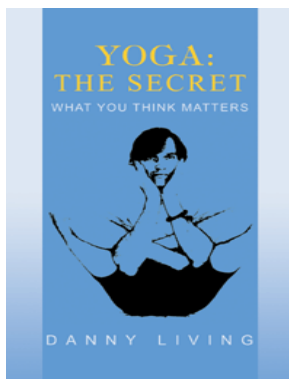
This is a chapter from the book **Yoga: The Secret** *What You Think Matters* by Danny Living.

David wrote:

“...brilliant. I heartily recommend, Danny’s book, **Yoga: The Secret**, and anything else that he may write.”

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*Repeated activation of the relaxation response can reverse sustained problems in the body and mend the internal wear and tear brought on by stress.*

- HERBERT BENSON, MD

*Fear is a question: What are you afraid of, and why? Just as the seed of health is in illness, because illness contains information, your fears are a treasure house of self-knowledge if you explore them.*

- MARILYN FERGUSON

**J**ust as stress releases chemicals in the body, joy releases its own powerful brand of chemicals; powerful chemicals that help dissolve pain and fill you with feelings of happiness.

These chemicals are the science behind yoga, for those who enjoy a connection with a scientific explanation.

These *joy* chemicals are also highly addictive and you will come to enjoy and crave them, which helps make it easier and easier to practice.

In the beginning, it requires effort and discipline to unroll your mat to practice. Eventually, the thought of *not* practicing yoga seems strange and unnatural.

### ○ ***Tension’s Chemical Origin***

So, how does tightness or tension get created and stored in the body in the first place?

Here is where the connection between the mind and the body and the wonderful chemistry

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linking them emerges.

*How you think* about the world is characterized as being either negative or positive. If through conditioning or other experiences, your thoughts tend toward negativity, those negative thoughts *generate* negative feelings that cause stress in the body. Negative thoughts *always* have at their root some fear or perceived threat to your security.

When you feel stressed due to some real or perceived threat to your security, you *feel* fear and **adrenaline** is released in the body. The release of adrenaline triggers the *flight or fight syndrome*, preparing the body for great physical exertion. A greater real or perceived threat results in a greater accompanying feeling of fear, since the amount of adrenaline secreted will be in direct proportion to the *intensity* of the fear-based feelings. So, a greater accompanying feeling of fear results in a greater amount of adrenaline being released into the muscles. The intensity of these fear-based feelings is *governed solely* by the intensity of the fear-based thoughts.

In situations and societies where running and/or fighting are inappropriate, the adrenaline, with no accompanying physical exertion to burn it off, creates poisonous by-products which are stored in the major muscle groups to which the adrenaline is distributed. The result is tension, tension proportionate to the amount of accumulated by-products.

Just as unexpended calories result in *stored fat*, unexpended adrenaline by-products result in *stored tension*.

Remember to label the underlying feeling behind the tension that occurs. The negative thoughts generate the feeling of *fear*. Your thoughts — and your thoughts alone — have the power to create feelings of fear. Real or perceived threats to your security, whether they are threats to your *physical* or *emotional* security, cause the release of adrenaline. Your body is simply obedient and does not know the difference between a real and *perceived* threat *or* the difference between your physical and your *emotional* security.

It is simple cause and effect:

- a you see something
- b your mind interprets that something as a threat, and
- c your body *feels* a discomfort called fear

Now, the *obedient* body takes over:

- a. adrenaline is released to power the fight or flight, but
- b. you don't run or fight because it's not appropriate in the situation, so no physical energy is expended, therefore,
- c. adrenaline is released and with no accompanying physical exertion, the adrenaline by-products become a toxin in the body, which is stored in the major muscle areas, like the shoulders, neck, hips and legs

There's your tension.

Negative *memories* and *feelings* find "rooms" in the house or areas of the body to take up residence. All *like* memories and feelings store themselves in the same rooms. The body develops its own routine for processing your cycle of negative thoughts, negative feelings, proportionate adrenaline release, and storage location for the resulting tension. Eventually, these rooms become *cluttered* from these repeated negative thought, negative feeling, adrenaline release, and stored tension cycles. All the

events and perception *memories and feelings* become part of the physical component matter of what makes your back, legs, neck, shoulder, etc. *feel* stiff or tense. Your “feelings” about you boss, dad, spouse, sense of isolation, etc., is in your stiff back, neck, hamstrings, or shoulders.

Living with this stiffness or tension and the accompanying pain, which, if prolonged enough, becomes like a pebble in your shoe and can be a constant nagging discomfort. Whole wings of your house become cluttered, and it affects your ability to love and be kind to your self and those with whom you come in contact.

*Your pain*, unless the people with whom you come in contact are enlightened beings who understand you and are actively removing tension from *their* bodies, *becomes their pain*. Soon, there goes the neighborhood...

## ○ ***The Tension Cycle***

Here is a summary of the Tension Cycle:

1. Negative thoughts create fear—as you perceive a threat to your physical, mental and / or emotional safety.
2. The fear response causes your body to release adrenaline.
3. Following the adrenaline release, you do not engage in any physical exertion.
4. The adrenaline by-products are stored in the muscles.
5. The stored by-products of adrenaline result in physical tension.
6. Physical tension creates negative thoughts and feelings (“I hurt, I’m stiff, I’m sore...”).
7. Negative thoughts and feelings attract more negative thoughts and feelings.

## ○ ***A Bath of Compassion***

While you are practicing, feel where you are tight in an asana. Is it your hips? Is it your shoulders, your arms, your waist, lower back, hamstrings, ankles, or neck? Welcome those discoveries of tightness with a mother’s compassion! Imagine there is a part of you that has *witnessed* all your hurts, sufferings and fearful reactions (but *not* shared or felt them) since you were a child.

Imagine this *witness* has a mother’s compassion and is bathing your body. Let your *witness* teach you and encourage you to take deep breaths, and imagine those deep breaths are clean water, cleansing and purifying those areas of tension.

Let the *witness* soothe you with comforting words of encouragement and love, love for your self and for the people who you discover in your thoughts when you feel tension.

Imagine that your arms, legs, neck and torso and all the places where you feel tension, simply need to be cleaned.

Acknowledge the tension is there and each time you breathe, *feel* the tension releasing; let it go. Dip the soiled area in the pure water of the breath. As you twist in an asana or sink into the depth of an asana, imagine that you are wringing out a cloth, and see the dirty water drip from your body and seep into the earth.

## ○ ***The Asana Cycle***

Here is a summary of the Asana Cycle:

1. Deliberately creating the feeling of bliss (a relaxed face, imagining a “soft” body, smiling with

- a closed mouth, happy or “no” thoughts) while practicing asanas safely allows you to “discover” tension areas in the body.
2. The physical practice causes the body to release endorphins and other “feel good” chemicals into the blood stream.
  3. Positive feelings during asanas, engaging bandhas to direct energy up the spine and deep breathing release tension during asanas.
  4. Releasing tension creates a feeling of relief, promotes relaxation and that “joy” feeling.
  5. The “joy” feeling attracts more joyful thoughts and feelings.
  6. Positive thoughts and joyful feelings are associated consciously and unconsciously with practicing yoga.

## **Letting Go – It’s Your Choice**

Sometimes, in these moments of discovery and release, channels, previously blocked, become unblocked, and as a reward for your efforts, you feel joy.

Know that *your* thoughts of hurt, disappointment, pain, frustration, hatred, anxiety, etc., created the feelings of fear, caused the release of adrenaline, and resulted in the storage of tension. The tension you encounter through the asanas is all ultimately the result of *your negative thoughts* – thoughts that generated negative *feelings* or fear.

Tension is stored in your body through an uncomplicated biological process. Just like excess unburned calories become fat, excess negative emotions or feelings become tension.

It’s so simple, but for some people, the pain they feel can remain a lifelong, elusive mystery. They believe that the cause is some person, place or thing in their past, present or future worlds. The sad thing is that they don’t know *they are literally manufacturing the pain themselves*.

No one forces you to think.

It’s said that our greatest power is our power to choose.

Why do we choose negative thoughts?

Negative thoughts generate negative *feelings*. Negative feelings generate tension – simple cause and effect.

## ○ **Be Perfectly Selfish**

Tension causes pain. Pain feels bad.

To be perfectly selfish, if you desire a life of ease and comfort, be selfish and choose positive thoughts, which generate positive *feelings*, which stimulate the release of **endorphins** and other chemicals that make the body feel good, and bring a gentle smile to the face. That’s joy.

Joy causes happiness. Joy feels good.

If you find tension, and discover that behind it is a stored painful memory, maybe someone you need to forgive, grief, sadness, hatred, frustration, anger or any other fear-based *things*, I invite you to let all these things go.

In order to change your feelings, you need to change your thoughts.

So you can feel happy.

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