

MEDIA ADVISORY

IDEA Health & Fitness Association Spotlights the Science of Willpower and the Latest in Yoga Research

IDEA Health & Fitness Association (www.idealife.com), the world's leading membership organization of health and fitness professionals with more than 23,000 members in over 80 countries, spotlights the science of willpower and the most recent research on yoga in the latest issue of *IDEA Fitness Journal*.

If, as recent research suggests, willpower works like a muscle, how do you train it? The ability to ignore temporary pleasures or discomforts to pursue longer-term goals requires lots of strength. But where does that strength come from? And why is willpower such a fickle friend, providing support on some occasions but not on others.

According to Roy F. Baumeister, PhD., willpower is not a personality trait, skill or virtue. Willpower operates like a muscle. Therefore, willpower can be strengthened, but also it can be exhausted. Only by understanding this can fitness professionals devise strategies to help clients meet their goals.

The “strength” model for willpower proposes four important ideas:

- *Willpower is a mind-body response, not merely a mindset:* New research has begun to identify the autonomic, cardiovascular, neuroendocrine and immune systems during acts of willpower.
- *Using willpower depletes resources in the body:* The mind-body response of willpower depletes physical power as it requires and lowers blood glucose levels.
- *Willpower is limited:* Exerting willpower in one area limits your ability to do so in all others.
- *Willpower is trainable:* Research shows that training any individual act of self control strengthens *all* acts of self-control, enabling the willpower “muscle” to become stronger.

Is there enough substantive research to justify the health claims of yoga? The amount of fact and fiction has grown in proportion to its increasing popularity. Therefore, researchers are attempting to quantify the role yoga plays in the treatment and prevention of specific diseases and health conditions.

While not all research is created equal, there is solid scientific evidence that yoga can help many conditions, including

- back pain,
- carpal tunnel syndrome,
- strength and flexibility,
- attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity,
- cardiovascular disease,
- depression,
- irritable bowel syndrome and
- menopausal symptoms.

-more-

There seems to be a consensus that properly executed yoga can be an effective adjunct therapy to conventional medical treatments for certain conditions, such as back pain, knee osteoarthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome. Balance, flexibility and muscle endurance also can be aided by yoga. The possibilities are exciting, but more studies are needed before any specific recommendations can be made.

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