

## Yoga and the Heart

Article for Trico Centre Newsletter – written by Victoria Bailey (Yoga Instructor)

February is Heart Month in Canada, a month when the Heart and Stroke foundation promotes the awareness and prevention of heart disease amongst Canadians. February also being also the month of Valentines' day, you may find yourself wondering what you can add to your usual cardio exercise program to help your heart stay healthy and show yourself a little more care, nurturing and love?

One great option is yoga. The word yoga roughly translates from Sanskrit as meanings "union," and it is a practice that connects the body, breath, spirit, emotions and mind with an aim of bringing well being to the person on all levels. There are many different styles of physical yoga practice, but all yoga classes typically involve aspects of physical postures or movement, breathing exercises or awareness, and meditation to comprehensively promote an individual's health. Another benefit most yoga classes have in common – reducing stress, a huge burden on the heart.

One study, published in the British Medical Journal reported that, through participants recitation of simple yoga mantra, their breathing was slowed to a cycle of six times per minute which meant it became synchronized with their cardiovascular rhythms which also have a 6 per minute cycle. The benefits were reported as being, "enhanced heart rate variability and arterial baroflex sensitivity, both powerful and independent predictors of long term outcome in heart disease."

The practice of yoga is guided by the text, "The Yoga Sutras." Sutra 2:35 tells us that, "Embracing reverence and love for all (ahimsa) we experience oneness. "A variety of translations of the yoga sutras exist but one writer, Nischala Joy Devi, translates this sutra in the following way, "When we refuse to take the time to treat our bodies, emotions and minds with reverence and love, they will often remind us – not so kindly – by failing to respond when we need them ... Listen to the wisdom of your own heart." So why not try a class, or even try a few different kinds of yoga classes? You never know, you might find one your heart loves.