

# AMPLITUDE

POWERFUL, PRACTICAL, AND POSITIVE LIVING WITH LIMB LOSS.

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AMPLITUDE

HEALTH

## YOGA: WHAT CAN IT DO FOR AMPUTEES?

WORDS MARSHA THERESE DANZIG,  
MEd, RYT 500

Image by Rebecca Brown.

### Yoga has gained traction

in the past two decades. It's everywhere. And perhaps nowhere is it more relevant, or needed, than in the life of an amputee.

When a person experiences limb loss, so many other losses come along for the ride: loss of freedom of

movement, independence, anonymity, and normalcy.

Yoga is a powerful antidote to all these losses.

And here's why.

Yoga offers the best of what amputees want—physical freedom, a relaxed psyche, and a feeling of calm in the face of uncertainty.

Yoga is a mind, body, and spirit phenomenon.

### THE MIND.

In yoga, a practitioner learns how to quiet the mind, reduce the constant thought interruptions, and get really present with what IS *right now*.

This keeps the amputee from getting too caught up in the "what ifs." The practice of paying attention to exactly what is happening in any given moment often reduces anxiety about a future outcome, which might include pain, frustration, or discouragement. The more

that mindfulness is practiced, the more the brain responds by building its "stress-reduction muscles."

**THE BODY.** A yoga practitioner learns yogic breathing, which greatly reduces stress and increases circulation and a sense of vitality about being alive. Yogic breathing also helps keep the practitioner in the moment and therefore helps him or her be more mindful.

Yoga poses, called asanas, help improve the practitioner's strength, flexibility, range of motion, spinal health, balance, and overall physical fitness: This positively affects the nervous system, digestive system, endocrine system, musculoskeletal system, and the brain.

**THE SPIRIT.** When a person feels flexible, strong, relaxed, and mindful, the spirit is also lifted.

Amputees may be coping with issues like phantom limb pain, grief, imbalance, learning how to walk again, vulnerability, or just accomplishing everyday tasks. These are all major stressors that can have an impact on an amputee's quality of life and physical well-being.

In addition, yoga has been

shown to be helpful for veterans and others who have experienced severe trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of PTSD include hypervigilance, repetitive distress due to memory of the event, frozen behavior, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Losing a limb is traumatic, and recovery can be stressful. Every amputee is therefore at risk for some aspect of PTSD.

Add up all of the challenges that amputees may encounter, and the amputee becomes a prime candidate for yoga!

What amputee wouldn't want all of the benefits that this ancient practice offers?

From the patient in the hospital who just wants to stand again, to the athlete who wants to stay flexible and focused, yoga can help, regardless of the person's fitness level.

I should know. I was that patient in the hospital, and I am now that athlete.

*Marsha Therese Danzig, a below-knee amputee, is the founder of Yoga for Amputees ([www.yogaforamputees.com](http://www.yogaforamputees.com)).*

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