

# PAIN

IN THE

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# āsana



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Cause, Care + Prevention of 8 Common Yoga Injuries

*A guide to safely practicing through injury  
while minimizing potential risk*

*Michael Bridge-Dickson*

# Yoga is Dangerous

*But it doesn't have to be*

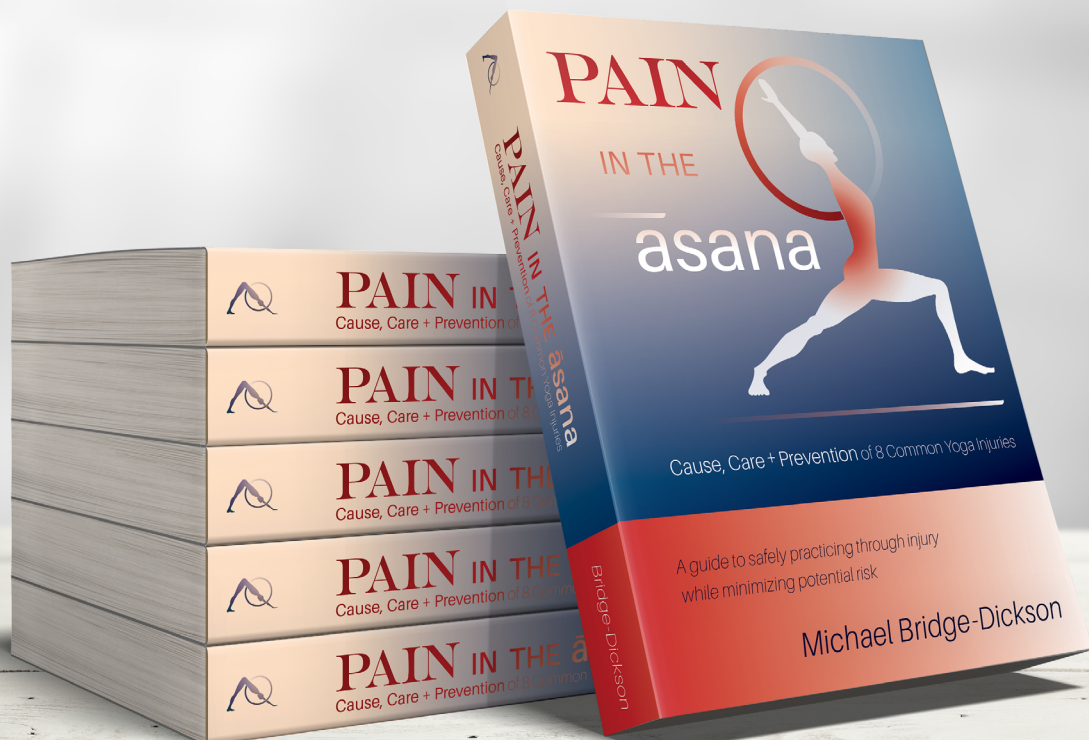


Despite its many health benefits, yoga is definitely *not* the risk-free health panacea it is often promoted to be. With more and more people doing yoga worldwide, practitioners are seeing the benefits of the practice, but also its many risks: *yoga injuries are on the rise*.

There are many potential causes of injury in yoga, and while it may be impossible to completely avoid injury, taking a more pragmatic approach to this popular practice minimizes the risks while reaping the rewards.

Around the globe, practitioners experience yoga's ability to reduce pain and inflammation, as well as its overall health benefits. Equally, however, practitioners are often disenchanted by the practice as they increasingly sustain injuries either during or as a result of their practice, or that the practice does not address. Newer practitioners may never even return to yoga classes if they sustain an injury in their first classes, and therefore will also miss out on what they can gain from yoga practice.

**Pain in the Asana** explains injuries commonly seen in yoga: what causes them, how to care for each stage of recuperation, and most importantly, how to prevent future injuries.



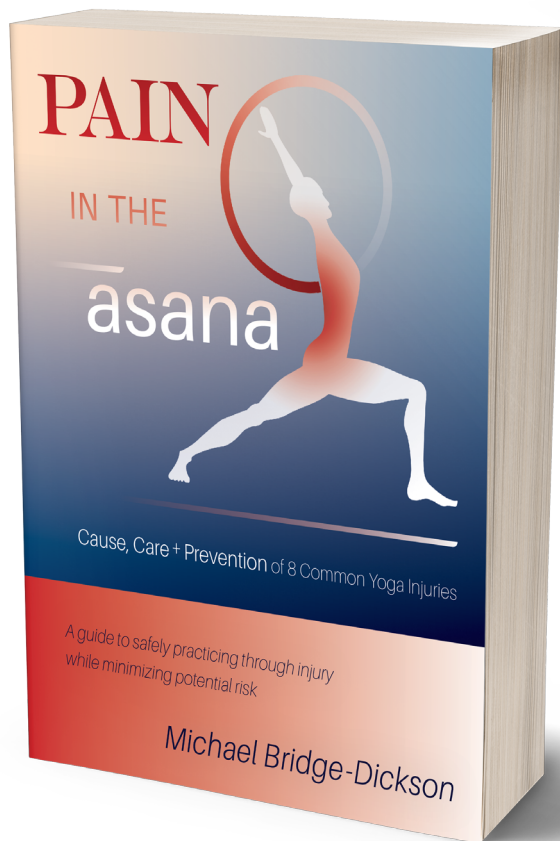
# Risks and Rewards

*Less pain, Faster healing, Safer practice*



Yoga can help prevent injury as well as manage and aid healing once injury occurs.

Nonetheless, every powerful modality carries its own set of risks — including yoga. Whether due to eagerness in practice, well-meaning but over-zealous teaching, misinformation, inefficient mechanics, predisposition to injury, or higher-risk poses, knowing the potential risks can heighten the rewards earned.



By reading **Pain in the Asana**, practitioners will learn:

- Causes of injury and their effects
- The 8 common yoga-related injuries
- Injury Anatomy: what it really means to be injured
- How your body reacts to pain and inflammation
- How to manage pain, boost tissue repair and recovery
- How to work within reasonable limits without hindering progress
- Yoga First-Aid — how to care for a fresh injury, and not make it worse
- Sustaining a practice while injured, and practicing to help heal
- Preventative measures: what to do and what to avoid
- How to strengthen potential weaknesses and reduce susceptibility
- Building resilience for life-long practice

Beautifully illustrated and accessibly written, **Pain in the Asana** will be an invaluable resource to your practice, helping you understand your injuries and their causes, special care tips for specific injuries, and methods for building the resilience that prevents future injury.

Yoga teachers will find effective ways to address the problems commonly seen among yoga practitioners, and by understanding the causes and preventative measures of these injuries, may be able to restructure their classes for an even safer environment, helping students stick with their practice for longer.



# Guided Support

## *About the Author*



**Michael Bridge-Dickson** has been guiding practitioners on their inner journeys since 2004. He has worked with athletes, dancers, seniors, people with reduced mobility, those with special concerns, as well as regular, everyday practitioners of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Michael's passion is helping people understand themselves — observing their patterns and habits, the mind revealing itself through the body.

As a teacher, Michael uses his keen eye for detail and vision of how those details affect the overall practice over time to structure sequences that help practitioners navigate through their yoga path.



Articulate and communicative, Michael strives to reach as many practitioners as possible, showing them how they can benefit from yoga's gifts safely and effectively while finding personal and physical fulfillment.

His vision stretches beyond those Michael connects with in classes, inspiring him to delve into writing to share useful information that can reach all who would benefit from his approach.

Michael combines his skills as a writer and illustrator to bring you his experience in a way that is clear and accessible so that you get the most out of your practice while integrating and applying helpful principles.

For all media inquiries, to book Michael for interviews, speaking & teaching engagements, or to discuss how yoga can benefit you and your organization, please contact:

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# Ask Away!

## Interviews and suggested questions



Michael's students and colleagues often describe him as a "walking encyclopedia" of yogic knowledge — you can ask him virtually anything pertaining to yoga (or not!) and he will likely have a deep and intelligent answer.

Some interviewers may not necessarily be involved in yoga, or know what aspects of yoga and yoga practice will be most relevant.

In preparation for the release of his new book, **Pain in the Asana**, below is a sample interview that targets the book, but also gives more background on Michael, yoga, and his perspective on practice. When booking Michael for interviews, please let him know the planned duration of the interview, and whether the interviewer prefers more elaborate answers to fewer questions, or shorter answers so that the interviewer can cover more ground — or when time is limited, few questions and short answers! Again, these are just examples, and Michael invites interviewers to ask any pertinent questions they wish.



### ***Why is yoga and injury such an important subject for you?***

Well nobody wants to be injured! I guess I'm passionate about it because I know from experience how deeply yoga can affect people, both positively and negatively. I've seen so many people get injured as a result of their practice, but I've also seen it save people during their lowest times, and I think it's such a shame that because of injury, many people may not experience the life-changing aspects of yoga — from their physical well-being to expressing their spiritual aspects. Although we can learn much about ourselves through injury, keeping a safe and healthy practice enables us to sustain and enjoy that practice for a lifetime.

I often get frustrated when people tell me, "oh, I can't go to yoga because I'm still injured" but often they are absolutely right! Often, yoga classes are *NOT* geared towards people who are injured and it's possible to make injuries worse in those cases.



# Ask Away!

## Interviews and suggested questions



***You recently ended your relationship with your teacher of many years. Why did you do that, and how does the teacher-student relationship contribute to injury?***

Yes, I did. The student/teacher relationship is an interesting one — often yoga teachers learn things about their students that only their doctors, therapists, or lovers know... and sometimes students may confide in their teacher things nobody else knows. Even when the student/teacher relationship is not particularly deep — the student comes, takes class, and leaves — it is still an intimate place: here is this person of authority giving instructions about your body in a room full of sweaty people wearing little and/or tight clothing, doing positions that are potentially very vulnerable. There's a power dynamic set up there that is ripe for abuse. While these power dynamics are largely beyond the scope of my upcoming book, **Pain in the Asana**, it's a really important aspect to consider in yoga classes in general.

How this dynamic relates and contributes to injury, though, is that both the student and the teacher can fall into various traps within the power dynamic: the student may have the desire to please, and push further than their body can sustain, or they may resist authority so deeply that helpful instructions go ignored; on the other hand, the teacher may overstep their authority, or take their authority too seriously and, while meaning well, give bad instructions or misread the student's limits.

Beyond the simple in-class dynamic, many yoga teachers are seen as spiritual leaders or personal mentors to their students. This elevates the teacher and increases the gap in power dynamics. The potential for deep learning and transformation is elevated in this more serious relationship, but so too is the potential for abuse, or at the very least, the potential for the traps I mentioned before to be exaggerated, and that can lead not only to physical injury, but also emotional trauma and in some cases it also results in sexual abuse when the line between teacher and student becomes blurred.

To come back to the first part of your question, I ended my relationship with my teacher of 13 years because it eventually became clear to me that he was taking advantage of that power dynamic — not only with me, but with other students as well. With me, we embarked on a project that was meant to be a joint venture, but really I was the one doing all the work: creating content, branding, sourcing suppliers, etc. That would have been fine, except his contribution was minimal, while he was still taking credit for my efforts. Because we had not just a teacher/student relationship, but a mentor/student relationship, I thought I had much more to lose by standing up for myself. He crafted and used that dependency to manipulate and take advantage of me.



# Ask Away!

## *Interviews and suggested questions*



Thankfully, though, I am coming out of the other side a better person and a better teacher, and that's what we must all do when we experience trauma, whether it is a physical injury or more serious emotional abuse: heal, recover, and use the experience to learn how to grow and not repeat the pattern.

### ***How can people keep themselves safe in yoga classes, then, especially if they are already injured?***

In my upcoming book, **Pain in the Asana**, I discuss several ways to care for 8 common yoga injuries: what to do and what to avoid, how to modify for particular injuries, and how to minimize the risk of injury in the first place. I would say that the most important aspect is moderation — to not push in your yoga practice — activate the muscles and work well, but don't stretch beyond your capacity and don't fight against yourself. Additionally, it's always good to check with your primary care physician to ensure yoga is appropriate for you, and then do some research on teachers and studios in your area to find skilled and knowledgeable teachers. Teachers are not always to blame for yoga injuries, but poor instruction is a leading cause of injury. Lastly, it's important to understand that not all intense sensation is bad, and lack of sensation doesn't necessarily mean nothing's happening: when you experience intense sensation in yoga, gently back off of the pose until the sensation is more tolerable. If that's not possible, come out of the pose, but try not to do so suddenly or aggressively — many yoga injuries happen when coming out of poses carelessly, or rushing into a counterpose that alleviates sensation, but may actually cause more harm.

### ***A counterpose? What's that?***

Counterposes are poses that go in the opposite direction of the pose you just did. They are helpful in releasing places in the body that you may have compressed in certain poses, but those places are also more vulnerable, more susceptible to injury immediately after poses as well, so you need to be careful not to go too far, even if it feels good in the moment.

### ***Do you feel that a book can address yoga and yoga injuries effectively?***

Not completely, no. Nothing replaces a good teacher, and no external resource, even a great teacher, can replace personal experience. However, much of the material in my upcoming book, **Pain in the Asana** is not and usually cannot be covered in standard group classes. With this book, I hope to equip practitioners with the tools and knowledge they need to keep themselves safer, whether it's their home practice or in class settings. I also hope that yoga teachers will read this book to help their students more effectively — the more both teachers and practitioners know about yoga and injury, the more we can minimize the risk of injury both in our classes and in our daily life.



# Ask Away!

## Interviews and suggested questions



### ***What makes your book stand apart?***

Three things:

- it's fairly comprehensive in addressing common needs
- it's (I hope!) easy to understand and apply
- the depth of information is not always found in other yoga books

Oh, and it's beautiful!

### ***You not only wrote this book, but you also did the layout and illustrations, is that correct?***

Yes, I have always been very artistic and loved drawing all my life. I also have a background in fashion design and illustration, so it only made sense to utilize those skills on this project. I wanted to produce a book that was both beautiful and useful, because we're naturally more inclined to use things that appeal to our senses, and that includes how-to books!

### ***What's coming up for you, do you have any more projects on the go?***

I do, yes. I'm releasing my first book, [Yoga: Point + Process](#) on November 25, and I have several projects in the works that will support people in their personal study of yoga.

*{Additional, timely projects and events will be announced here}*

### ***Where do you currently teach, and how can people contact you?***

I currently teach at Naada Yoga Montreal and offer workshops & trainings at Ashtanga Yoga Montreal. People can visit my website at [www.sensasana.com](http://www.sensasana.com) to learn more about me and what I offer. All of my social media links are on the site too, so people can follow me from there.

### ***Do you have any special offers for our viewers/readers today?***

Yes! *{Michael will determine a special offer, based on current workshop offerings, publications, and the media outlet's suggestions}*

### ***Is there a particular charity you support?***

Yes! I'm currently involved with the Yoga Mala Foundation, which helps fund yoga programs for non-profit organizations, providing access to yoga for those who would not normally have access to yoga — and often those who don't have access to yoga are those who would most benefit from it. I'm honoured to be one of the wonderful teachers involved in the Yoga Mala Foundation, and I've seen it affect people's lives in the most touching ways. Currently, the YMF operates within Montreal, but it is planning to branch out across Canada to provide the same great service to all Canadians who would benefit from a yoga practice.





# Ask Away!

## *Interviews and suggested questions*

Some additional sample questions might include:

- *What is the leading cause of injury in yoga?*
- *How can people reduce their risk of injury in yoga?*
- *What do you find are the most common injuries in yoga?*
- *Do people come to yoga for help with specific injuries? Which ones?*
- *Where can people purchase the book, once it's available?*
- *How did you come to yoga, and what made you decide to become a teacher?*

Ask away, Michael is an open book!

