

Yoga with Weights
FOR
DUMMIES®

by Sherri Baptiste with Megan Scott, PhD



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Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2006 by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2005935158

ISBN-13: 978-0-471-74937-0

ISBN-10: 0-471-74937-0

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

1B/RW/RS/QV/IN



About the Authors

Sherri Baptiste is an inspirational teacher at the forefront of yoga training in the United States. She was born into a rich heritage and family of pioneering teachers; her parents, Magaña and Walt Baptiste, established yoga on the West Coast in the mid-1950s. Her brother, Baron Baptiste, authored the book *Journey into Power: How to Sculpt Your Ideal Body, Free Your True Self, and Transform Your Life With Yoga* (Fireside). Sherri has been teaching yoga since her teens and is the founder of “Baptiste Power of Yoga,” a nationally recognized yoga method, as well as a yoga-with-weights teacher-training program and a yoga teacher certification and advancing studies program recognized by *Yoga Alliance*. Sherri presents classes and workshops throughout the United States; she’s a presenter for Western Athletics’ Bay Clubs, Gold’s Gym, Nautilus, Equinox, IDEA World Fitness, Body Mind Spirit, ECA; and she offers many yoga retreats, including retreats at Kripalu, Omega, Haramara, Green Gulch Zen Center, Rancho La Puerta Spa, and Feathered Pipe Ranch. A radio and television personality, she’s featured in video, DVD, and CD “Power of Yoga” and “Power of Meditation” programs. You can learn more about Sherri at the following Web sites: www.powerofyoga.com and www.yogawithweights.com.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to “The Spirit That Lives Within You.”

Authors' Acknowledgments

Joint Acknowledgments: For the photographs in this book, we wish to thank photographer Bonnie Kamin Morrisey for her expertise and her excellent photos; a picture is worth a thousand words. Many thanks as well go to all the models from Sherri's yoga classes who posed for photographs: Linda Prosche, Allan Carr, Marian Jung, Christine Bandettini, Nick Freeman, William Keller, and Justine Rudman (and her baby within). We would also like to thank Paula and Andy Valla for crossing the Iron Man Triathlon finish line in Chapter 16 and for being our yoga-with-weights champions. Thanks as well go to Carol Jones for handling the models' makeup and to Stress Management Center of Marin for its beautiful studio. We would also like to thank Magaña Baptiste for the vintage photos of herself with her husband, Walt Baptiste.

Project Editor Alissa Schwipps steered this book forward, Copy Editor Josh Dials saw to its clarity, and Acquisitions Editor Mikal E. Belicove encouraged us to take the leap of faith; we're grateful to each of them. We also wish to thank Linda Sparrowe, author and teacher, for serving as this book's technical editor. The treats of good coffee and dark chocolate as we worked through the pages of this book along with pets Bodhi, Sage, and Mollie are all in the mix, too.

They say to see clearly, you should stand on the shoulders of a giant. Our giant in this book is Peter Weverka. He's our experienced wordsmith and skilled writer who helped to sculpt and shape the information found on every page of this book. We know of no other way to acknowledge our gratitude and appreciation for his professionalism and guidance in the process of writing this book than to just say, "Thank you!"

Additional Acknowledgments from Sherri: I wish to express my personal gratitude to those who made this work possible. First, thanks to Larry Payne, PhD, author and friend, for recommending me to Wiley Publishing. Larry told me that writing a book takes on a unique story of its own with many wonderful players in the story. I want to thank my "guiding light," author Karen Leland, for her guidance, friendship, and open heart, and Elson Haas, MD, associate and friend, for giving his time and lending his support. Most of all, my love, gratitude, and sincere appreciation go to Megan Scott, PhD, because without her unending inspiration, contributions, and expertise in the science of physiology, yoga, and physical culture, this book wouldn't be what it is today. We've developed new territory and solid groundwork together with the revolutionary yoga-with-weights system.

I believe that the timeless principles and knowledge so relevant and perfect for today — the principles found in this book — stem from those who walked this path before us and pioneered the way. I'd like to thank my parents, Magaña and Walt Baptiste, for all their love and encouragement through the years; they are pioneers and giants in the fields of health and fitness, human potential, and yoga. My love also goes to my sister Devi and my brother Baron. I'm deeply grateful to my husband Michael David Freeman and our children, Vanessa, Nicole, Nicholas, and Connor, for their support and great spirit during the writing of this book. Most of all, my thanks — beyond words — goes to all my students who, by their commitment and presence in class, nudged me to grow and expand. As their teacher, I have the space to speak my authentic voice and be true to who "I AM."

Additional Acknowledgments from Megan: I would like to thank Sherri Baptiste, who shared her knowledge, beauty, and expertise in the elegant creation of this book. Without her blazing the way with her strong passion for yoga and teaching, this book wouldn't have been written. I thank her for all the long hours of work we shared together in her home, for providing treats and yummy coffee, for her patience and willingness to face the challenges that come with writing a book, and for co-creation and friendship at its best.

I would also like to acknowledge with love and gratitude my parents, who have always encouraged and supported me in my life journey and have lived the example for me to follow; my siblings, who have been my greatest cheering section; and my husband, Ben Messina, MD, who provided more technical support, medical expertise, and advisement than one could imagine. Gratitude and appreciation also go to John Friend, my most cherished yoga teacher, who taught me more than any book or degree could ever touch upon; without his guidance and support in my yoga career, I wouldn't be where I am today. I offer love and gratitude to the Anusara yoga community for providing encouragement, support, joy, and laughter, always helping each other along the way; Desiree Rumbaugh, a masterful teacher who has taught me depth and understanding of the principles of alignment and living life with grace; and to my yoga students who have taught me so much — I honor and value each and every one of them.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

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Introduction

Yoga with weights is the newest incarnation in a long line of yoga-based exercise programs. Yoga itself is at least 5,000 years old; yoga exercising — what we know as *yoga postures* — emerged about 600 years ago. Over the centuries, yoga evolved as it traveled to new cultures, and its practitioners have refined it. Yoga is based on universal principles that appeal to its practitioners on every level — mentally, physically and spiritually. It effects deep change. The discipline acquires a new significance for each generation that encounters it.

What's different about yoga with weights? If you haven't guessed already, yoga-with-weights practitioners carry weights in their hands and strap weights to their ankles as they exercise. Weights add another dimension to yoga; they stabilize your body and engage you more deeply into the yoga exercises. All the physical benefits of traditional yoga — muscle toning, balance, and flexibility — come faster because yoga with weights is more intense and dynamic than traditional yoga. Yoga with weights creates a balance of strength and flexibility. You notice an increase in vitality and an overall sense of well-being. Each time you practice leaves you feeling a little bit better, and, cumulatively, the workouts have enormous health benefits.

Like traditional yoga, yoga with weights is a practice of mind, body, breath, and spirit. Within every exercise you have the ability to harness the power of yoga and bring alive these great Eastern teachings in practical ways that will serve you in your daily living. This book represents a golden opportunity to start down the road to good health and well-being.

About This Book

Yoga with weights is a new exercise program. You won't find the exercises we describe in this book anywhere else. We have three goals in writing this book: to clearly explain the benefits of yoga with weights, safely instruct you in the practice, and motivate you to do the workouts.

Between us, we have 65 years of experience with yoga. Sherri, daughter of the American yoga pioneers Walt and Magaña Baptiste, has been associated with yoga since she took her first baby steps or assumed her first lotus position,

whichever came first. Sherri followed in her parents' footsteps, founding "Baptiste Power of Yoga," a nationally recognized yoga method. Sherri has been teaching since her teens and hosting yoga classes, workshops, and retreats for 14 years. Megan, a doctor of integrative medicine, has 20 years of training and practice in mind-body self-regulation techniques. She studied in her college years with Walt Baptiste and has extensive training in Anusara yoga, a discipline that specializes in living with grace and mastering the alignment principals. Megan has been teaching yoga therapy classes for ten years.

We called upon our collective experience with yoga, our understanding of how to teach yoga, and our experience with physical culture practices to create the exercises you find in this book. Some of the exercises are modifications of traditional yoga poses (the *asanas*); others are exercises we developed ourselves to complement traditional yoga. All the exercises are rooted in the classic yoga principles that cultivate the quality of the mind as well as the body. We want every exercise to strengthen your body, build your physical stamina, and cultivate your overall health and well-being. We also make every effort to pay attention to your safety and not put you in a position where you could injure yourself. As long as you follow our instructions, pay attention to your breathing, and consciously remain aware of your body and its needs in the course of exercising, you can be confident about doing your yoga-with-weights workout without getting injured.

We divide the exercises into several different workouts. For example, we offer practical exercises to relieve stress, plus stamina-building, total-body, and energy workouts. We also provide instructions so you can create a yoga-with-weights workout tailored to your health needs and goals. All the exercises in this book are illustrated with photos so you know exactly how to move your body in the exercises.

Another great feature of this book is that you don't have to read it from start to finish; you can dip in wherever your curiosity gets the best of you. The table of contents and the index guide you in your quest to find the information and exercises you need. Or, you can do it the old-fashioned way, reading the book from cover to cover. It's up to you.

Conventions Used in This Book

We want you to understand all the instructions in this book, and in that spirit, we adopted a few conventions:

- ✔ We explain exercises in numbered steps, which are formatted in **bold**. Follow Step 1 first, and then Step 2 . . . just kidding, you know the drill. But we do recommend you read through each exercise before diving in.
- ✔ Foreign terms, including Sanskrit terms, appear in *italics*. (Sanskrit is considered the language of spirituality and is used in the ancient texts of India, the country where yoga originated.) Don't worry; we follow every italicized term with a clear definition.
- ✔ All Web addresses appear in `monoFont` for easy identification.

That's not too many conventions, is it? You could almost say that this book is unconventional.

Foolish Assumptions

Pardon us, but we made some assumptions about you, the readers of this book. We assumed that

- ✔ You want to be in good health.
- ✔ You're looking for a workout that will make you stronger, healthier, more balanced, and more flexible.
- ✔ You have little or no background in yoga, yoga with weights, or weightlifting.
- ✔ You want a book that explains yoga with weights in simple terms that you can understand and put to good use easily.
- ✔ You want a practice for body, mind, and spirit, and you want to dive into a deeper, more meaningful exercise practice.
- ✔ If you're a senior citizen, you're looking for exercise techniques that will help you be stronger and more limber.
- ✔ If you're pregnant, you want to exercise during your pregnancy so you can have an easier childbirth and a healthier baby.
- ✔ If you're in love with a certain sport — running, swimming, or baseball, for example — you want to get better at the sport you love.
- ✔ If you're a yoga or fitness instructor, you want to know what yoga with weights is all about so you can teach it.
- ✔ Above all else, you want to feel great and look your best!

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into six neat parts. Here's a brief description of what you'll find in this book so you can get the lay of the land and decide where you want to start poking around first.

Part I: Getting Started

Part I describes what yoga with weights is, how the program differs from yoga and weightlifting, and how it can help your body, mind, and spirit. You discover what equipment you need and how to prepare yourself for your first workout. You look into all-important safety issues so you know right away that you'll be safe doing yoga with weights. And we tell you how to manage exercise pain and discomfort and how to set up a place in your home or office for yoga-with-weights workouts.

Part II: Mastering the Basics

Part II explores yoga-with-weights breathing — you discover different breathing techniques and why conscious breathing is so good for your health — and also delves into the mental side of yoga with weights. You find out how to get motivated to exercise and discover different mental-relaxation techniques. After you prepare your mind for your workout, you can move into the warm-up phase; Part II presents your first yoga-with-weights workout: the Balanced Workout, a total-body workout.

Part III: Refining Your Technique

Part III contains — count 'em — five yoga-with-weights workouts, each one designed to improve your health and conditioning in a different way. You find workouts for toning, energizing, strengthening, or restoring your body. You can also do a workout designed to burn your body fat and trim your love handles.

Part IV: Personalizing Your Program

Part IV is for people who want to tailor their yoga-with-weights exercise programs to their own health goals. You find out how to address specific aches and pains in your body with different yoga-with-weights exercises, how to tone and strengthen — that is, target — specific parts of your body with the exercises, and you find some tasty, wholesome advice for improving your diet.

Part V: Addressing Special Situations

We devote Part V to three groups: athletes, women, and seniors. We provide athletes and weekend warriors with yoga-with-weights exercise programs specific to the sports they love most — swimming, running, soccer, and many others. We provide yoga-with-weights exercises for pregnant women and exercises that address women's health issues. Finally, we offer an exercise program for seniors.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

Part VI gives you, in handy list style, advice for staying motivated as you do yoga-with-weights exercises and for charting your progress. We also dispel ten myths about yoga with weights that may have previously prevented you from trying this exercise program.

But wait — there's more! Turn to the appendix at the end of the book to find yoga Web sites, the names of yoga magazines, and other stuff that helps you discover more about yoga and yoga with weights and get the equipment you need.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you get the most out of this book, we've placed icons here and there to steer you to important and helpful information. Here's what the icons mean.



Next to the Tip icon, you find tricks of the trade and helpful hints to make your yoga-with-weights workouts more enjoyable and productive. You also find suggestions about where to look for good equipment and good advice — which helps out your pocketbook and your peace of mind — and how to fit your workouts into your busy schedule.



Where you see the Warning icon, tread softly and carefully. It means we're giving you advice for avoiding injury or doing something that could harm you.



When we provide a juicy fact that bears remembering, we mark it with the Remember icon. When you see this icon, prick up your ears. You'll discover something that you need to remember throughout your adventures in yoga with weights.



We often offer a variation in an exercise — a little twist that makes the exercise either more challenging or a little easier. We mark these variations with the Alternative icon. When you see this icon, you discover a slightly different way to do the exercise. We're here for you in case you want to go the extra mile and, in the case of difficult exercises, when the exercise may be too hard for you.

Where to Go from Here

This book doesn't require a start-to-finish read. However, before you attempt any workouts, we recommend that you check out Chapter 4, which explains yoga-with-weights breathing; you'll be pleasantly surprised to discover how healthy and vital yoga-with-weights breathing makes you feel. We also recommend you check out Chapter 6 about warming up, which all fitness experts agree you should do before exercising.

Other than that, feel free to jump in where the jumping looks best. Think you're ready for your first yoga-with-weights workout? Go to Chapter 7 without passing Go and without collecting \$200. Do you need some background information before you undertake yoga with weights? Go to Chapter 1, which introduces this new type of yoga.

Do you have a health goal in mind? Whatever your health goals are, you can find a yoga-with-weights workout in this book to help you on the road to good health. Here are some common health goals and where you should turn in this book to meet those goals:

- ✓ **Lose weight.** Who doesn't want to lose a few pounds? See Chapter 11, the Endurance Workout, and Chapter 12, the Belly-Burner Workout.
- ✓ **Get stronger.** To increase your body strength, try the exercises in Chapter 10, the Strengthening Workout, and Chapter 11, the Endurance Workout.
- ✓ **Reduce stress.** Stress is the silent, slow-acting culprit behind many ailments. To reduce stress, do the exercises in Chapter 7, the Balanced Workout, and Chapter 9, the Restorative Workout.
- ✓ **Stay young.** Yoga has a well-deserved reputation for making people look and feel younger. See Chapter 7, the Balanced Workout; Chapter 9, the Restorative Workout; and Chapter 11, the Endurance Workout.
- ✓ **Increase stamina.** To give yourself more staying power, see Chapter 11, the Endurance Workout.
- ✓ **Sleep better.** If your aim is to get a better night's sleep, check out Chapter 4, breathing techniques; Chapter 7, the Balanced Workout; and Chapter 9, the Restorative Workout.

Part I

Getting Started

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"Okay, you've got the breathing down,
but wouldn't you be more comfortable
in a different workout suit?"

In this part . . .

part I is where you get your feet wet. Don't be shy. Walk right up to the shore and stick your toes in the water. We're here to show you the way.

In this part, you find out what yoga with weights is and all the different ways this exercise program can help you physically, mentally, and spiritually. We describe in detail the equipment you need for yoga with weights, and we show you how to get ready for your first workout. We also look at safety issues, show you how to manage exercise pain, and explain how to set up the ideal place for a yoga-with-weights workout.