

Foreward by Linda Bacon, PhD.

In Yoga XXL, by Ingrid Kollak, RN, PHD, demosHEATH.



Foreword

Some readers of this book will likely skip past the introductory text (including this foreword!) and head straight for the photos and exercises that will get them moving and stretching. I say, good for them. Those like me, however, will want to revel first in the encouraging, informative, and body-positive chapter at the front of the book. And I'll confess to especially liking the pictures: I loved seeing photos of real XXL yogis captioned with their confident assertions that size is no barrier to enjoying great health and satisfying physical activity.

While these notions may startle some, they seem obvious to me. You see, I have built an entire career—as a nutrition professor, therapist, exercise physiologist, researcher and author—on the premises of Health at Every Size, or HAES®. HAES precepts rest on voluminous evidence that

we are healthiest when we appreciate and care for the bodies we're in and most likely to achieve good health when we abandon a focus on weight-loss. We can achieve fitness, good nutrition, and well-being, it turns out, regardless of our shape or dimensions.

HAES recognizes that there can no more be a single “normal” or healthy body shape or weight than there could be a perfect, healthy height or ear shape. Body Mass Index is not destiny, nor is it a sound measure of health. (U.S. government data from the Centers for Disease Control mirrors that of many other studies, showing, in fact, that a little “extra” body weight is associated with *increased* longevity.)

Now, it's easier to act on all this if we recognize, and learn to reject, our society's prevailing fat stigma. We might readily enough accept that a fat body (in the HAES community, we use that word proudly:

nothing wrong with fat) can be a healthy body, but find it harder to get used to the idea that it can also be a beautiful one. Yet, we can learn to admire bodies in a variety of shapes, including our own—adorning them and taking pride in their curves as well as for all that they do for us. Without such acceptance, it's hard to let go of diet culture and embrace the imperative of self-care.

One basic element of that care is learning to feed ourselves well, and the other is embracing physical activity. Studies show that our culture's emphasis on weight loss tends to be part of the problem rather than any kind of solution. We see increasingly that learning to eat without rules, without trying to "control" our appetites, actually leads to more nutritious eating and greater satisfaction. "Your body is the best nutritionist you'll ever know" is a basic precept of my next book, *Eat Well: For Your Self, for the World*. That's why HAES focuses on eating "intuitively," learning to let internal signals take charge—or relearning, actually, since we did it as babies.

As for the joy and benefits of finding movement you like, physical activity is available to all people and worthwhile in its own right, even if it never causes anyone to "drop" an ounce. Whether it's dance you like, bowling, walking, swimming, games, aerobics, hula hoops, or of course, *yoga*, anyone can enjoy the good feelings that can come from putting our bodies to work. Books like this one do so much to open doors—and yoga studios, running clubs, gyms and hearts—to this uplifting idea.

Ingrid starts with the HAES-friendly premise that exercising for well-being is better, and more effective, than exercising for slimming purposes. She explains how yoga practice can meet the all-important HAES priority of caring well for the body you're in, and stresses that thinness conveys no special access to fitness and health. "Despite what you might see in the media," she explains, "yoga is not the exclusive territory of the lean and limber." (I find it puzzling, in fact, that some of the same folks who enthuse about and encourage yoga's accessibility to people of all ages, from small children to the elderly, overlook or even actively exclude larger people.)

Yoga XXL inspires through these liberating ideas and its profiles of happily practicing large-sized yogis. The advice, photos, and instructions are clear and easy to follow. And for those with physical barriers to certain exercises or moves, it includes techniques like props and modifications to make the exercises safe and possible. The advice found here will help just about anyone, large or small, old or young, experienced or out of shape, seeking fitness and a measure of serenity through yoga practice.

As Ingrid makes clear, you don't have to be thin (or young, or hip, or dressed in fancy gear) to enjoy and grow through yoga. And you also don't have to be XXL to enjoy and get the most out of this book.

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