

TABLE 13-1
PATANJALI'S EIGHT-FOLD PATH

PATH	DESCRIPTION
Yama	Moral precepts: nonharming, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, greedlessness
Niyama	Qualities to nourish: purity, contentment, austerity (exercise), self-study, devotion
Asana	Postures/movements: a calm, firm, steady stance in relation to life
Pranayama	Breathing exercises: the ability to channel and direct breath and life energy
Pratyahara	Decreased reactivity to sensation: focusing on senses inward, nonreactivity to stimuli
Dharana	Concentration
Dhyana	Meditation
Samadhi	Ecstatic union, flow, "in the zone," spiritual support/connection

OVERVIEW

The elements of yoga that directly address health concerns are known as *yoga therapeutics* and have been developed through the millennia. The Ayurvedic medical system of India and yoga therapeutics share many commonalities in their development to include a rich, allegorical language (ie, earth, ether, chakra, prana) that is employed to this day. While these terms may sound foreign to many Western-trained medical professionals, closer examination reveals some striking similarities with modern terminology in their descriptions of disease and health.

The term *yoga* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *yuj*, meaning to yoke or unite, as in uniting the body, mind, and spirit. This union is achieved through various methods and technologies that include the familiar postures. A complete classic yoga practice (Table 13-1) has 8 components that equate to moral restraints, personal behavioral observances, postures, regulation of breath, drawing the senses inward, concentration, and meditation.

Over time, this complete yoga practice results in increased strength, balance, stamina, flexibility, and relaxation.²⁻⁵ These outcomes can be achieved without the stereotypes that yoga requires bizarre body positions and occult religious practices. Simple body movements (*asanas*) performed with mindfulness and attention achieve the outcomes without pain or extremes of range of motion (ROM). Yoga, as a life science philosophy, also makes no statement about any specific religious practice or spiritual belief; it can be used to support all major faith traditions. The comprehensive approach of yoga (see Table 13-1) can be likened to the widely embraced, present-day self-development theories that extol the virtues of the marketing theme "Body-Mind-Spirit."

YOGA THERAPY HEALTH MODEL

Yoga therapy is a broad philosophical model of health based on the human experience; as such, it is a powerful tool in linking the historical "parts" paradigm to a biopsychosocial or integral model of human movement. This model was developed in an Eastern culture that used concrete images (eg, bodies, sheaths) to describe what was understood to be an interwoven, indivisible whole—or, in Western terminology, an *integrative model*. The yoga model of health includes all dimensions of the patient's human experience and traces back c. 3000 to 4000 years to the Taittiriya Upanishad,