Through **Yoga**, A Path Beyond 12 Steps

**Yogi Tommy Rosen** uses his practice to help others in recovery.

**BY THE AGE OF TWO,** Tommy Rosen was hooked on sugar. At 13, deeply affected by his parents’ bitter divorce, his addictive behaviors escalated to drugs and alcohol. By the end of his teens, he was trying any substance that pulled him away from the emotional pain of the present moment.

Rosen isn’t alone. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 6.5 percent of Americans are dependent on alcohol. Countless others fixate on drugs, shopping, pornography, food, even texting to quiet their internal suffering.

Rosen eventually was able to break his cycle of self-destruction, kicking his addictions with the help of a 12-step program, then embarking on the spiritual path of yoga. Now, he’s using his experience to fuel a movement that he calls Recovery 2.0, a holistic approach to addiction recovery that includes yoga and meditation.

And the research seems to support Rosen’s work. According to a review article published in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine,* mounting evidence supports the effectiveness of yoga and mindfulness meditation for treating and preventing addictive behaviors. A second study, published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine,* found that practicing yoga increases GABA levels in the brain (having low levels of this amino acid is associated with depression, anxiety, and addictive disorders).

**TOWARD A SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

Rosen views recovery as a multitiered process. People who are mired in drugs, alcohol, food, sex, or gambling often need a 12-step program—what Rosen calls Recovery 1.0—to lift them out of addiction. And yet, he says, a deeper life transformation must take place for recovering addicts to achieve and maintain inner peace.

His program of Recovery 2.0 includes five parts: a perspective that looks beyond the traditional 12 steps; mounting evidence supports the effectiveness of yoga and mindfulness meditation for treating and preventing addictive behaviors.

**Yoga for Recovery**

Try these practices to help ease the pull of addictive behaviors.

- **Kundalini basic spinal energy series** to heal and repair the body’s systems.
- **Vinyasa sun salutations** to build strength and flexibility.
- **Left nostril breathing** to calm cravings (close off your right nostril with your right thumb and breathe in and out slowly through the left nostril only).
kundalini and vinyasa yoga (to build strength, increase awareness, and repair the body’s systems); meditation (to quiet and focus the mind); a healthy relationship with food; and finding a mission or purpose in life.

Without this stage of recovery, the newly sober often stay stuck in the energy of addictive behavior, says Rosen. In fact, up to 60 percent of drug addicts who enter a recovery program relapse, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Others may substitute one addiction (like alcohol or drugs) with another (like gambling or sex). The disconnect between mind, body, and spirit can make it more difficult to overcome disease.

“In Recovery 2.0, we ask people to get in touch with their body and breath, and to connect more consciously with the foods they eat,” he says. His goal: to shift their focus from past addictions to a productive future; to help them identify their purpose and find a mission in life.

At his Santa Monica yoga studio, Rosen’s classes incorporate meditation, a 12-step meeting, and group discussions about health, nutrition, lifestyle, and fitness. His upcoming book, *Recovery 2.0: Moving Beyond Addiction and Thriving in Life*, due out in May, will give a blueprint for the process to others seeking a path for their recovery.

“In Yoga is the counterpoint to addiction, because it unites mind, body, and spirit while addiction perpetuates a state of disconnection,” says Rosen. “If you want to break the addiction frequency and move forward, you have to develop a connection with yourself. Constant distraction will never allow you to do that.”

Looking at Rosen today, there’s no hint of his troubled past. He is happily married, his family and friends love and trust him, and he has a closer connection to himself and to God.

“It’s a total transformation of mind, body, and spirit,” says Rosen. “I’ve gone from someone whose life was organized around and dominated by drugs and alcohol to someone who can’t imagine having it in his life.”

—AMY PATUREL

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**Eat Broccoli for Aching Joints?**

**RESEARCHERS HAVE LONG** known that cruciferous vegetables—members of the cabbage family like Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and bok choy—are among the healthiest you can eat, with cancer-fighting and anti-inflammation properties. Now it looks like these super greens, especially broccoli, might help protect against osteoarthritis as well.

Broccoli is a good source of sulforaphane, a compound that blocks an enzyme linked to joint destruction and inflammation. That might help prevent or slow the progression of osteoarthritis, suggests a new British study.

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, affecting nearly half of all Americans. Symptoms, including pain and stiffness in the hands, feet, spine, hips, and knees, can be degenerative and tend to get worse after age 45.

In the study at the University of East Anglia, mice with a disorder similar to osteoarthritis had significantly less cartilage destruction if they had been fed a diet rich in sulforaphane.

“We know that exercise and keeping to a healthy weight can improve people’s symptoms and reduce the chances of the disease progressing,” said Alan Silman, medical director for Arthritis Research UK, a co-founder of the study, “but this adds another layer in our understanding of how diet could play its part.”

Lead researcher Ian Clark said it was too early to make recommendations for human health. But more information could be on its way. In a small new trial, human patients with osteoarthritis will eat a diet of “super broccoli” (extra high in sulforaphane) for two weeks before having knee-replacement surgery—allowing scientists to see how a dietary boost affects the joint and its recovery.

—MERINA STERLING

**Airedale Eating Broccoli**
Jay Schmetz