

Yoga Biomechanics – Stretching Redefined

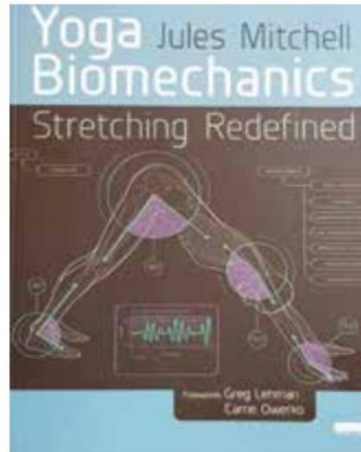
Author: Jules Mitchell

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Call me a natural contrarian, but I always find a certain deliciousness when a book challenges received wisdom. Think how swathes of the yoga community self-combusted on the publication of Mark Singleton's *Yoga Body: the Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, in which he dared to suggest that modern



asana owes a greater debt to Indian nationalism and European gymnastics than any *rishi* transmission.

Yoga Biomechanics by Jules Mitchell will do similarly for alignment cues and postural ideals what *Yoga Body* did for the need to critically assess the history of asana. The author challenges us to reconsider what we mean by the term 'stretching' and why many of the alignment 'rules' handed down in teacher training are borne more from tradition and aesthetic sensibility than exercise science and related evidence-based research. Mitchell demands that yoga teachers and practitioners find the courage to question received wisdom and by so doing empower smarter decision-making and adaptability.

Mitchell clearly knows her stuff and her love for her subject shines through, perhaps to the point that you'd be edging away from her in parties. At points in the book, I found myself reading paragraphs in a one, two, skip-a-few style as the detail into Newton's Laws of Motion fell into a mental "not even useful in a pub quiz" slush pile. That said, Mitchell's style of writing is very easy to follow so even if you're a physics dunderhead like me, you never totally lose hope or interest.

Peppered throughout the book are "Thought Provokers", where she invites us to reconsider whether our knowledge is still relevant or valid in view of the new information she has provided. Mitchell's mission is to nurture our curiosity and ability to question – further, to ask the *right* questions. She is at pains to say that there are no right or wrong answers, provided the 'why' of our beliefs can be answered objectively through evidence-based research without recourse to anecdote or confirmation bias.

Yoga Biomechanics – Stretching Redefined would be an excellent book for anyone interested in cutting asana free from “well-worn beliefs and hackneyed assumptions”, instead moving it towards a narrative of body tissue adaptation through which safe, effective asana can flourish. A valuable addition to any yoga practitioner’s library.

Reviewer: Trudy Morrison