



# Yoga & Equity: Glossary of Terms

“Some of my most consequential steps toward being an antiracist have been the moments when I arrived at basic definitions. To be an antiracist is to set lucid definitions of racism/ antiracism, racist/ antiracist policies, racist/ antiracist ideas, racist/ antiracist people. To be a racist is to constantly redefine racist in a way that exonerates one’s changing policies, ideas, and personhood.”

Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be An Antiracist*

## Glossary

**Trigger Warning: Discussion of white supremacy, racism**

**Accomplice** - “An ally will mostly engage in activism by standing with an individual or group in a marginalized community. An accomplice will focus more on dismantling the structures that oppress that individual or group—and such work will be directed by the stakeholders in the marginalized group.” - Colleen Clemens, [Ally or Accomplice?](#) See also: [Accomplices not Allies](#)

**Ally** - “TO BE AN ALLY IS TO...”

1. Take on the struggle as your own.
2. Stand up, even when you feel scared.
3. Transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who lack it.
4. Acknowledge that even though you feel pain, the conversation is not about you.
5. Be willing to own your mistakes and de-center yourself.
6. Understand that your education is up to you and no one else” Amelie Lamont

**Antiracist idea** - “An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequities.” Ibram X. Kendi

**BIPOC** - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

**Black Lives Matter** - In July 2013, George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of 17-year old Black boy Trayvon Martin. Alicia Garza typed “I continue to be surprised at how little Black lives matter... Our lives matter.” on Facebook. Thus, alongside Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag was born. “In the years since, we’ve committed to struggling together and to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive.”

**Cisgender** - a description for a person whose gender identity, gender expression and sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man, masculine and male).

**Credentialing** - Spending time in a group discussion listing one's "credentials" (often with regard to social justice work) in order to seem like an expert and demand a higher level of attention to one's opinions.

**Discrimination** - "Discrimination is action based on prejudice. These actions include ignoring, exclusion, threats, ridicule, slander, and violence." Robin DiAngelo

**Emotional labor tokenism** - "When a person or group of people with white privilege or a predominantly white organization places the burden on token BIPOC to carry the emotional labor of discussing and working on all matters related to racism, thus reducing them simply to their race. This does not refer to a BIPOC whose paid work is intentionally focused on race."  
Layla Saad

**Equity vs. equality** - Equality means treating everyone the same way, regardless of variations in circumstance or needs. By contrast, equity means making adjustments so that everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources. To achieve equity, these adjustments must ensure that all groups have commensurate access to resources based upon each group's unique and particular needs. Whereas in an equality framework, everyone receives the same, in an equity framework, those who need more will receive more, so that everyone is on equal footing.

**Heteronormativity** - an ideology which states that heterosexuality is the normal, or natural, sexual orientation and aligns the gender binary, sexuality, and gender roles. Heteronormativity includes both the idea that there is only heterosexual orientation (cisgender female in relationship with cisgender male) and the idea of the gender binary (a rigid binary of only male or female). Heteronormativity confines us to strict gender roles that restrict how we think about sex and gender. ([Alexandra Baran, Feminism 101: What is Heteronormativity? FEM Magazine, Feb 1, 2020](#))

**Implicit Bias** - "Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These are mental shortcuts that help us more easily make sense of our incredibly complex world. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control." - Victoria Lynn Alexander, from the [Anti-Racist Resource Guide](#)

**Institutional Racism** - Institutional racism, also known as systemic racism, is a form of [racism](#) that is embedded as normal practice within [society](#) or an organization. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in [criminal justice](#), [employment](#), [housing](#), [health care](#), [political power](#), and [education](#), among other issues. <sup>u</sup> (Wikipedia)

**Intersectionality** - Coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980's to describe the way Black women experience the interlocking oppressions of race and gender, she [recently](#) described intersectionality as, "basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts."

**LGBTQIA** - an inclusive term for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual.

**Microaggression** - “The everyday, subtle, intentional — and oftentimes unintentional — interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.” - Kevin Nadal, [What is a microaggression?](#)

“I do not use ‘microaggression’ anymore. [...] A persistent daily low hum of racist abuse is not minor. I use the term ‘abuse’ because aggression is not as exacting a term. Abuse accurately describes the action and its effects on people: distress, anger, worry, depression, anxiety, pain, fatigue, and suicide. What other people call racial microaggressions I call racist abuse.” - Ibram X. Kendi

**Prejudice** - “Prejudice is pre-judgment about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs. Prejudice consists of thoughts and feelings, including stereotypes, attitudes, and generalizations that are based on little or no experience and then are projected onto everyone from that group.” Robin DiAngelo

**Privilege** - “Privilege, in the social justice context, is an advantage or a set of advantages that you have that others do not.” Ijeoma Oluo

**Queer** - an identity created for anyone outside of the heterosexual norm and meant to be inclusive and create a sense of acceptance. If someone describes themselves as queer, it’s quite often because their sexual orientation and/or gender falls under the LGBTQ umbrella, rather than the heterosexual. ([Villanova School of Business, Glossary of DEI terms](#))

**Racism** - “Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.” Ibram X. Kendi

**Racist** - “One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.” Ibram X. Kendi

**Saviorism** (see White saviorism)

**Stereotype** - Stereotypes are characteristics imposed upon groups of people because of their race, nationality, and sexual orientation. These characteristics tend to be oversimplifications of the groups involved, and while some people truly do embody the traits of their stereotype, they are not necessarily representative of all people within that group. Stereotypes are not always accurate and even if positive, can be harmful. (thoughtco.com)

**Systemic racism** (see Institutional racism)

**Tokenism** - “The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce.” Oxford English Dictionary

**Tone Policing** -- “Tone policing is a tactic used by those who have privilege to silence those who do not by focusing on the tone of what is being said rather than the actual content.” Layla Saad

**Transgender** - has many definitions. It is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who deviate from their assigned gender at birth or the binary gender system. This includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, genderqueers, drag kings, drag queens, two-spirit people and others. Some transgender people feel they exist not within one of the two standard gender categories but rather somewhere between, beyond or outside of those two genders.

**White apathy** - "White apathy, like white silence, is a passive way of continuing to be complicit in white supremacy through nonaction. White apathy says BIPOC are not important enough for you to show up, use your voice, and do the work. This collective lack of energy toward antiracism and social change is what keeps white supremacy locked in place." Layla Saad

**White body supremacy** - "White supremacy would be better termed white-body supremacy, because every white-skinned body, no matter who inhabits it—and no matter what they think, believe, do, or say—automatically benefits from it." Resmaa Menakem

**White centering**- "White centering is the centering of white people, white values, white norms, and white feelings over everything and everyone else. If we think back to the definition of white supremacy, white centering makes sense. White supremacy is the idea that people who are white or white-passing are superior to and therefore deserve to dominate over people who are not white. Under white supremacy, whiteness is centered as the norm." Layla Saad

**White fragility** - Robin DiAngelo describes white fragility as "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves." White fragility preserves the racist status quo, because it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to have productive conversations about race.

**White privilege** - "White privilege describes the unearned advantages that are granted because of one's whiteness or ability to 'pass' as white. It is very important to note that white privilege is not a concept that is part of the natural order of life. In the absence of white supremacy, white privilege is meaningless." Layla Saad. See also: Peggy McIntosh, [White Privilege, Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#).

**White saviorism** - "The belief that people with white privilege, who see themselves as superior in capability and intelligence, have an obligation to 'save' BIPOC from their supposed inferiority and helplessness." Layla Saad

**White silence** - "White silence is exactly what it sounds like. It is when people with white privilege stay complicitly silent when it comes to issues of race and white supremacy." Layla Saad

**White supremacy** - "Race scholars use the term white supremacy to describe a sociopolitical economic system of domination based on racial categories that benefits those defined and perceived as white. This system of structural power privileges, centralizes, and elevates white people as a group." Robin DiAngelo

"White supremacy is far from fringe. In white-centered societies and communities, it is the dominant paradigm that forms the foundation from which norms, rules, and laws are created" Layla Saad

**Whiteness** - “Whiteness is not a kinship or a culture. White people are no more closely related to one another, genetically, than we are to black people. American definitions of race allow for a white woman to give birth to black children, which should serve as a reminder that white people are not a family. What binds us is that we share a system of social advantages that can be traced back to the advent of slavery in the colonies that became the United States. ‘There is, in fact, no white community,’ as Baldwin writes. Whiteness is not who you are. Which is why it is entirely possible to despise whiteness without disliking yourself.” Eula Biss, from “[White Debt](#)”

## Glossary of Yoga Terms and Principles

This is a short list of yoga terms accompanied by related terms that you may encounter. Yoga philosophy words are often referred to in Sanskrit, a classical South Asian language,.

**Ahimsa** (a-HIM-sa) - non-harming

**Aparigraha** - non-covetousness

**Asana** (ah- sah-na) - yoga pose

**Asteya** (ah-stay-a) - non-stealing

**Avidya** (ah-vid-yah) - ignorance

**Dharana** (dar-ana) - concentration

**Dhyana** (dee-ana) - meditation

**Dvesa** (dvaysha) - aversion

**Geetaji** - a respectful way to refer to Geeta Iyengar, BKS Iyengar’s daughter

**Guruji** - a respectful way to refer to the founder of this method, BKS Iyengar

**Karuna** - compassion

**Klesa** (klay-sha) - The afflictions or causes of suffering, of which there are five: avidya (ignorance), asmita (ego), raga (desire), dvesa (aversion), abhinivesa (clinging to life/fear of death)

**Maitri** (my-tree) - friendliness

**Niyama** (nee-yah-mah) - observances in yoga, these are ethical principles of yoga, the second of the eight limbs of yoga

**Patanjali** - The author of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which lays out the 8-fold path of yoga

**Pranayama** - breath control, breath work

**Prashantji** - a respectful way to refer to Prashant Iyengar, son of BKS Iyengar

**Raga** (rah-ga) - desire

**Raga/dvesa** (rah-ga/dvaysha) - desire/aversion

**Santosha** - contentment

**Satya** (saht-ya) - truthfulness

**Samskara** - karmic imprints

**Sutra** (soo-tra) - refers to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The yoga sutras are aphorisms that outline the principles and philosophy of the 8-limbed path of yoga

**Svadyaya** (svah-di-yah-yah) - Self-study

**Tapas** - zealous practice

**Vidya** (vid-yah) - wisdom

**Viveka** (viv-ay-ka) - discriminative discernment, not in the sense of racial discrimination, but rather discrimination in the sense of keen understanding, clarity

**Yama** (yah-mah) - abstentions, ethical principles of yoga, the first of the eight limbs of yoga

**Yamas and Niyamas** - The ethical principles of yoga in yoga philosophy. These are the first two “limbs” of the eight-limbed system of yoga, and are prerequisites for Asana (physical practice of

yoga), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (the turning inward of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (liberation)