



### Living With Scoliosis - Elise Browning Miller's Story

At the age of 15, I was diagnosed with a severe structural right thoracic scoliosis of 49 degrees with a compensating left lumbar curve. Surgery was recommended to me. A second opinion from an orthopedic surgeon specializing in scoliosis at the Children's Hospital in Boston was slightly different. He felt I was at the end of my growth spurt and recommended I be under close observation but hold off with the surgery. If my degree of curvature continued to increase, then he would recommend surgery. He suggested swimming and mentioned that he had just heard of yoga that involved stretching and breathing.

This to say the least was a great relief. I was open to anything but surgery. I did not discover yoga until my 20's when I became motivated by my back pain and bad posture. My right shoulder was higher and more rounded forward with a hump beginning to appear on my right side of my back. Yoga decreased my pain and helped me feel more aligned right away. The more I did yoga, the more balanced I felt and made a decision to make yoga my career.

While doing my own yoga, I was not sure which poses were most helpful and which poses were less effective. Then I met B.K.S. Iyengar who worked with me personally to help correct my scoliosis and gave me more insight in how to work with the lateral curve of my spine. Famous for his book, *Light on Yoga*, Iyengar is a renowned yoga teacher from India whose system is recognized for its precise attention to alignment and anatomical detail. A therapeutic focus is provided for special physical conditions such as scoliosis.

I continue to work with my own scoliosis, focusing on how to work with the postures therapeutically. Combining physical therapy principles with yoga, I have created a program that helps people of all ages with scoliosis. My focus is on lengthening the spine, stretching muscles that have become tight, and strengthening muscles that have become weak. I also focus on de-rotating the spine and ribs, creating more balance and harmony in the body. I see students privately, teach classes at my center and at yoga conferences, give scoliosis workshops in the US and conduct yoga retreats throughout the world. My program is now available in the DVD/video, *"Yoga for Scoliosis with Elise Browning Miller"*, which is about a 45 minute home yoga practice. There are three sections, approximately 15 minutes each that can be practiced individually or in its entirety. All of the poses in the video are included in this booklet.