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OM Magazine
Issue 140, April 2023

Published by:



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Welcome



Time to book your yoga escape. This month, we've got our popular annual retreats guide, featuring all the very best yoga breaks and holidays for 2023. These are places where you'll be spoilt rotten, feast on fresh, healthy foods and get totally blissed out on the mat. If you've never been on a yoga retreat before, or you're just in need of a little extra nurturing right now, then book your spot in paradise

with OM. Go on, you deserve it!

We've also got a sneak preview into the OM Yoga Show in London later this year (only six months to go...and counting!). That includes a look at some of the inspirational yoga teachers you can expect to see there, such as the amazing ashtanga legend, Kino MacGregor, who'll be flying in from the States to attend.

There are plenty of other top teachers lined up too, so get in quick if you want to practice with Kino or any of our other incredible yoga leaders. You'll find details of how to book — including early booking priority for OM subscribers — inside our show preview pages.

We've also got some other big news for you — an OM first, in fact! We're delighted to announced the launch of the inaugural OM Yoga Awards, which will be taking place at the London show this October. You can vote from 31st March, across a range of categories, with winners set to be announced on 14th October, 2023 at Alexandra Palace.

And one more thing. We've also launched OM Subscriber Rewards, which are special offers and discounts only available to subscribers. Expect brilliant offers, special discounts and more from some of the great yoga and wellness brands that we love when you sign up!

Be sure to enter this month's competition as well, where you can win a great big bundle of yoga goodies from the awesome folks over at Yoga-Mad. We love them too!

Have a fab month, folks!



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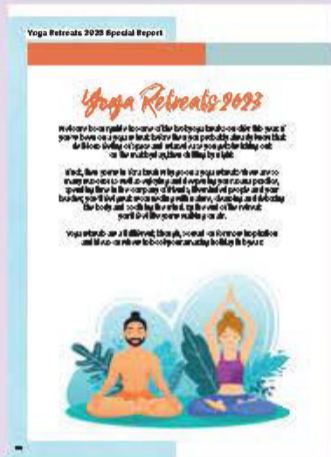
OM in 30 seconds



Find out more about our 'yoga at home' sequence guru, Isabel Lankester, what makes her tick, and how you can practice online with her each and every day.

OM Meets Isabel Lankester, Page 36

Pack your bags and jet off somewhere lovely... because you're totally worth it! Browse our yoga retreats guide this month for some super wellness holiday ideas. **Yoga Retreats 2023, Page 52**



Practice with this month's cover star Ravi Dixit in our regular Man on the Mat column. This month, he's showing us a deep dive into Vatayanasana (horse pose).

Man On The Mat, Page 85

Don't miss...



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Contributors



Ceri Lee

Ceri has taught yoga professionally since 2001, inspired by the philosophy and hatha practice that greatly benefits body and mind. Her passion to offer accessible yoga as part of a healing and transformational journey is reflected in her wide spectrum of certified training in advanced Sivananda Yoga, Remedial Yoga, and more recently Menopause Yoga. Ceri owns and runs the Yoga Light Centre in North Wales, a studio with guest accommodation providing yoga classes and retreats for health, peace of mind and connection to the authentic self. Visit: yoga-light.com



Diane Ashfield

Diane Ashfield (aka Yoga With Dash) is a British Wheel of Yoga teacher with classes online and in the London Borough of Bromley. She has been practicing for over 25 years and has a light-hearted, non-fussy approach to her teaching, primarily focusing on appreciating and enjoying the journey towards asana. Diane is also a qualified Reiki therapist and tarot reader. Find her on Instagram [@yogawithdashuk](https://www.instagram.com/yogawithdashuk)



Marja Wilson

Marja is a certified eRYT 500 yoga instructor. Her experience, passion, and sense of humour keeps her approach to teaching yoga and mindfulness light and entertaining. With a background in health science and community nutrition, her studies in India serve to enrich her understanding of the mind-body connection. Since retiring as a performing songwriter a.k.a. Marge Calhoun, Marja and her husband, John, live part time in the USA and Australia.

Regular contributors:

Claudia Brown, Paula Hines, Sarah Highfield, Lauren Bloxham, Lydia Kimmerling, Kiki Morriss, Sue Pugh

Words of *wisdom*

"People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy"

Anton Chekhov

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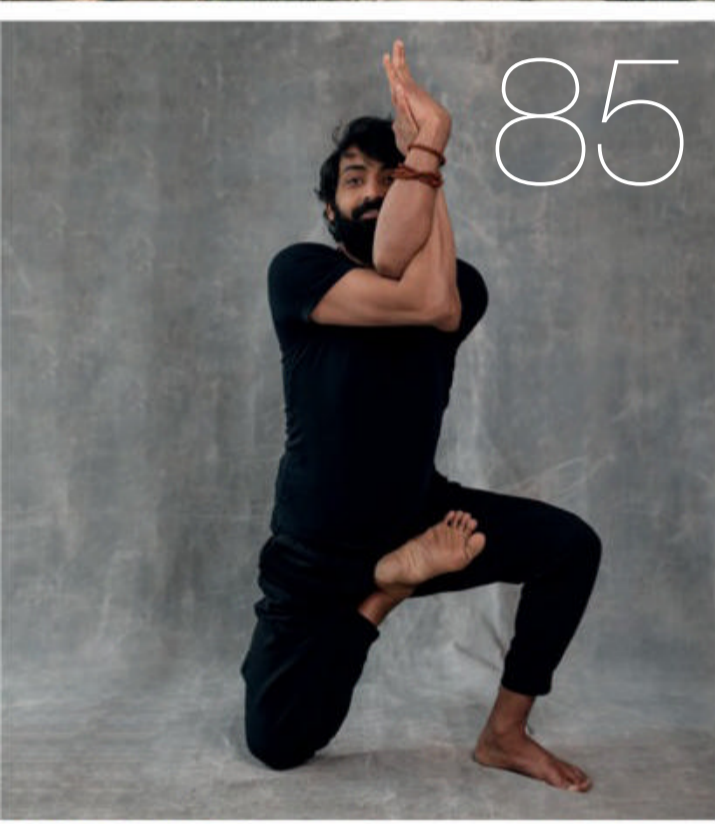
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Photo: in her image photo.com

My *secret* place

Yogi: Mellara Gold

Location: Petaluma, California, USA

Once known as the 'egg basket of the world', Petaluma – the southernmost town in Sonoma County, California – has stayed true to its agricultural roots while evolving into a foodie haven. It's a great place to soak up the miracle of nature, whether that's on a gentle stroll or even enjoying a simple bit of yoga, says Mellara Gold. "I just love the freedom that I feel inside my heart when walking through the mustard flowers in springtime," she tells OM. "They turn the vineyards and valleys into a vibrant yellow feeling of happiness while adding just a pop of colour to the local landscape." ॐ



N@maste

Love OM magazine and want to tell the world? Here's your chance



Yes, I can do yoga!

I began my yoga journey, at age 57, to encourage a recently-widowed friend out of the house one evening a week. I never foresaw how it would change my life! I've lost three stone in weight and feel calmer and more flexible than I have in years. My husband bought me a subscription to OM for my birthday last July and I am hooked — I read it from cover to cover every month. I have shared your article 'I Can't Do Yoga Because I'm Not Flexible' (from December 2022) with a number of my 60-something friends and OM has convinced them, where I couldn't, to give yoga a try. They're feeling hugely better for it. I'm looking forward to this year filled with more yoga and OM to snuggle up with when I get home!
Mary, by letter



Furry friends

I really appreciated your Adopt Don't Shop article that appeared in the February issue. What a sweet story, with some amazing people and their incredible pets! As a proud adopter myself (to Murphy, a gorgeous black lab) it's such an important message to get out there. There are so many adorable animals in need of a home right now. Thank you for sharing the message.
Mel, by email



Keep in touch



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Just in time

Your March issue arrived just in time for me! I recently moved into a new home and am looking to transform one of the rooms into my own private yoga sanctuary. The DIY Your Own Home Yoga Space feature was great for a bit of inspiration! Perfect timing!
Al, by email



Great reasons to *subscribe*



Inspiration for all

Unlimited inspiration from the world of yoga to power you both on the mat and in your life.



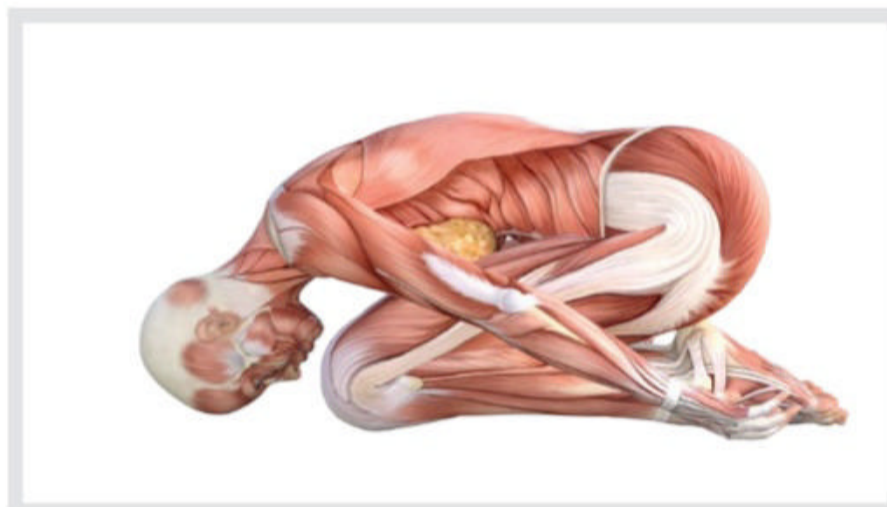
Healthy recipes

Delicious plant-based recipes to follow in your own yoga kitchen for optimum health & wellbeing.



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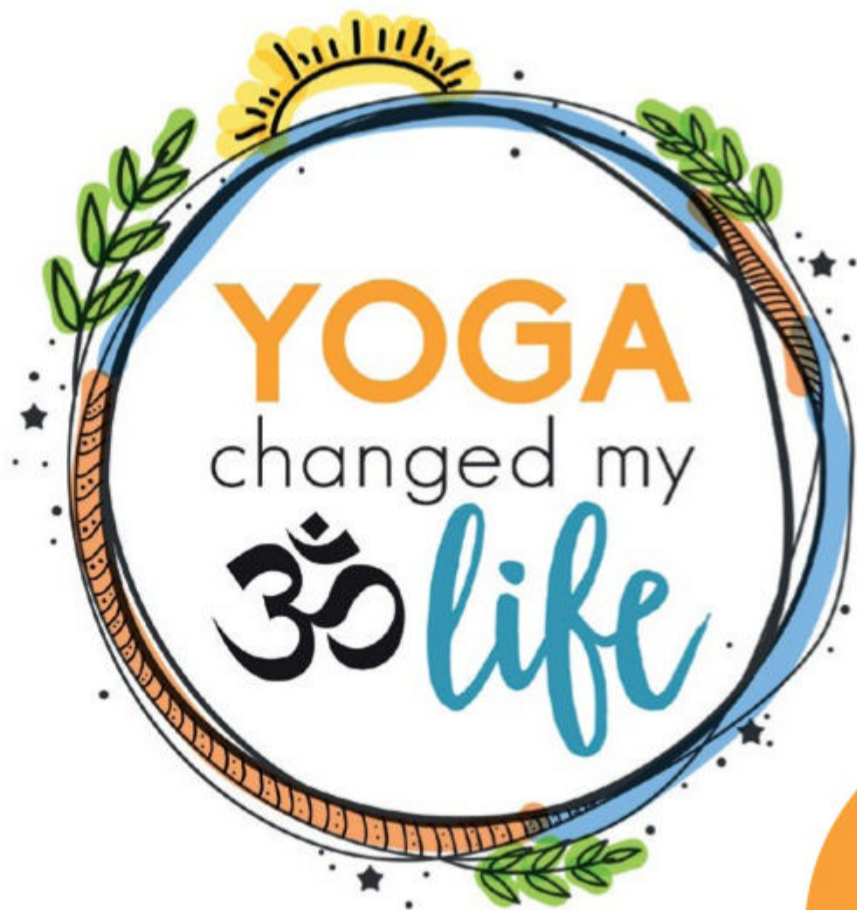
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Discovering Bikram Yoga at her local studio has brought huge physical and mental health benefits for Chloe Mountifield

NAME:
Chloe Mountifield
AGE: 31
OCCUPATION:
Freelance social media marketing consultant
YOGA YEARS:
1.5 years



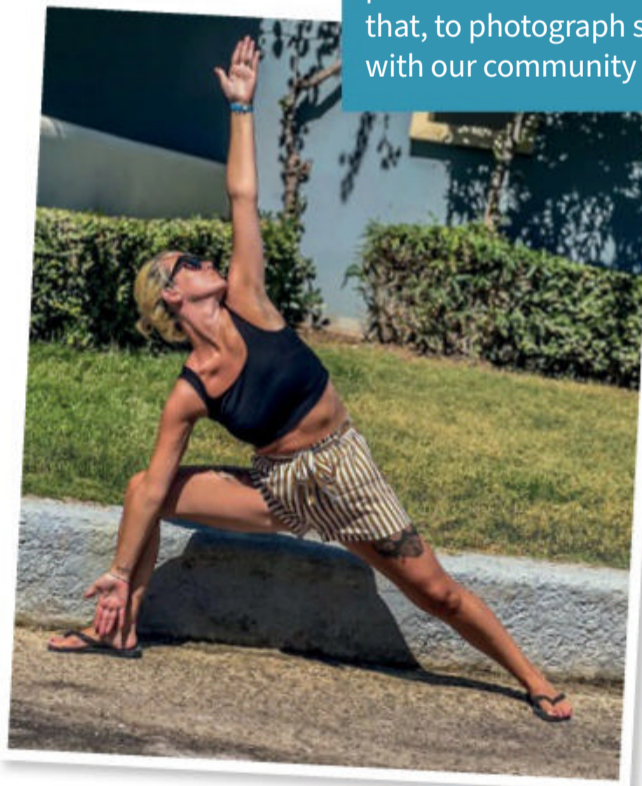
Why did you start yoga?

Our local studio, The Sweatbox, Worthing, opened in May 2021, as lockdown restrictions began to ease. I had always been a keen runner, mainly for my mental health, but I was constantly plagued with injury and in quite a physical job at the time. So I was frequently operating with chronic pain and unable to run for extended periods as a result of my injuries and pain levels – and so I went along with a friend a few days after the studio opened. I wanted to try something new, but had no idea what and so I gave Bikram Yoga a go – and I’ve never looked back since that first day. I have since increased my practice to a minimum of three times a week.

How has yoga changed your life?

In ways I could never have imagined, both mentally and physically. I suffer with a knee condition, and also hip dysplasia, and had been told by medical professionals I would need surgery on both areas. But since committing to the practice, surgery is no longer in my prognosis. I am consistently injury-free as a result of the adaptations my teacher has supported me in making, as well as all the incredible health benefits the practice holds.

Similarly, I was storing and holding on to a great deal of unresolved trauma mentally, and experiencing daily battles in my head. I was a socially awkward, closed-off introvert when I started yoga. I am now kinder to myself, I am confident, and have made new friends as a result of my practice. I still suffer with my mental health on occasion but the lessons and teaching I have received have



Best yoga moment

Practicing Bikram in a New York City studio to kickstart #sweatboxontour – a fun idea a few of us students had to try and practice Bikram in each country we visited on holiday...or, failing that, to photograph some postures on our travels and check in with our community back at home!

enabled me to shift my mindset and I am much more in control and operating with much healthier and beneficial habits as a result.

Favourite yoga haunts?

The Sweat Box, Worthing: my local studio and the place that started my yoga journey and literally transformed my life. The owner, Lesley, is the most incredible teacher I have ever met – her passion, dedication, commitment, energy and genuine love and compassion for her students is unrivalled and is the reason so many of us have fallen in love with the practice since she opened the studio. It is

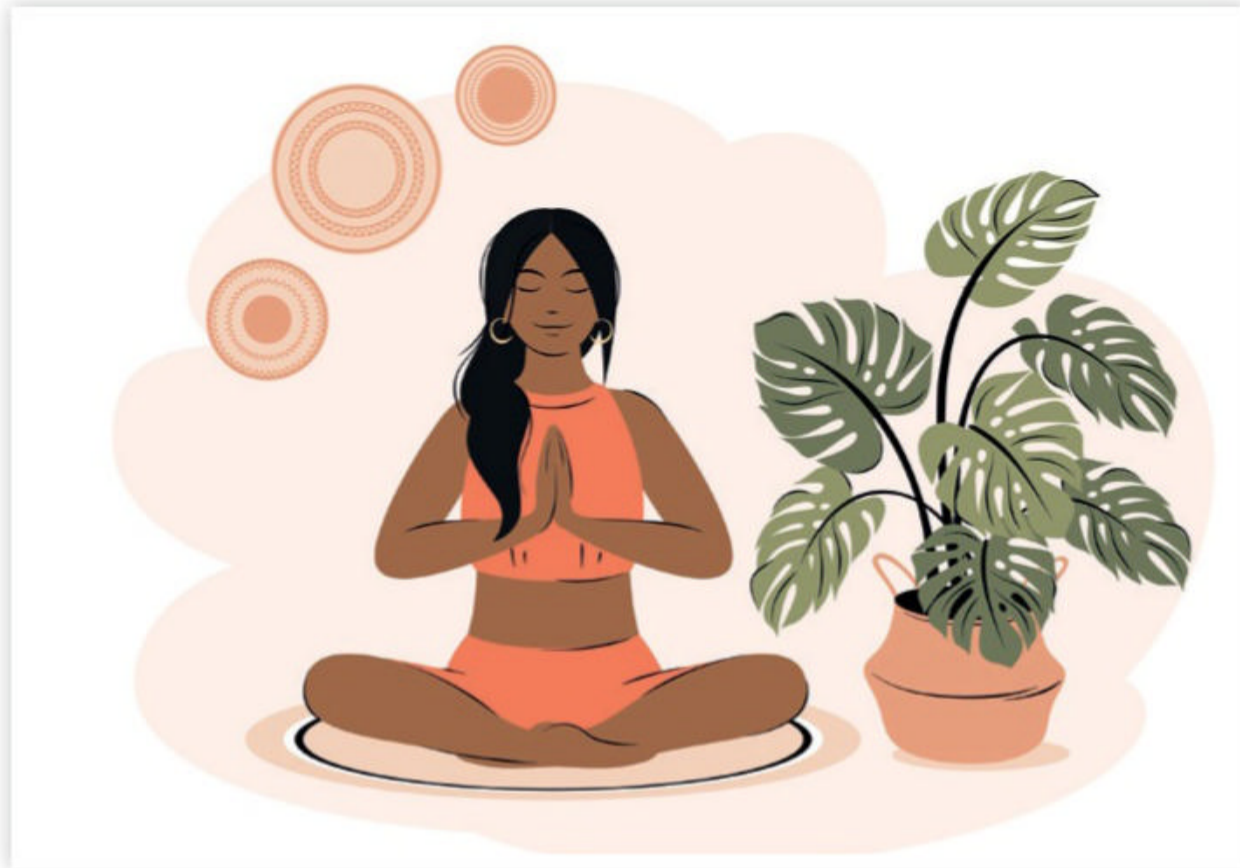
the only Bikram Yoga studio in Sussex, making it such an incredible community to be part of.

Anything else

I was such a cynic before I discovered Bikram Yoga. I had no interest in ‘doing the work’ – or even that I needed to in order to live a happier and fuller life. So I would just urge people to try it; so many more people should be experiencing the same life-changing transformation as I have. ॐ



Living the teachings – understanding yoga’s everyday spiritual meanings



KARMA

By Sue Pugh

One of the earliest references to the ethical implications of karma was provided in the Vedas (sacred scriptures). A Vedic

theologian Yajnavalkya expressed a belief that: “A man turns into something good by good action and into something bad by bad action.” Nowadays we generally consider karma to mean that ‘what goes around, comes around’, or reaping what we sow.

However, it is an expression that can be interpreted in several ways, with the ancient view acting as a warning to us to not misbehave, or else, just being one interpretation. Indeed, the concept of karma is often misunderstood. Another interpretation is ‘action’ and acting in such a way to keep us in alignment with our dharma, the path to our highest purpose. When we veer off that path that is leading us to our dharma, karma will act like a warning sign; we will instinctively know that something is ‘off’. If we choose to ignore these warning signs things will get worse until we are forced to reassess our lives. Real life examples could be staying in an unhappy relationship, or in a career that you know is not right for you. Initially, the warning signs might be subtle, but

eventually circumstances could change in such a way that you have to act (a physical or mental health issue, for instance). Karma is kind in these situations and tries to protect us by encouraging us to take action, which we may or may not act upon. We must remember that it is our own actions, not the actions of others, that have the most profound influence on our lives.

This alternative interpretation of karma is taking it as a sign that some aspect of your life is not as it should be. We are not supposed to live our lives feeling restricted and only half alive. Perhaps reflect upon what is not working out. When did things start to feel like this? What could the alternatives have been? Commit to doing the work that is necessary to get back on a better path, the path leading to your highest purpose.

The serenity prayer sums up karma very well: “May I find the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” ☸

Sue Pugh is a yoga teacher and founder of vitabonayoga.com and yogainspecialplaces.com



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The Happiness Explorer

How to...make anxiety your friend

By Lydia Kimmerling

I believe anxiety can become your friend. If anxiety is something you experience, I want to share with you how you can use it to feel happier and create more emotional freedom. Anxiety is there because it's trying to tell you something: it's a sign that something needs to change.

It's like when a warning light comes on in your car to tell you that it needs a service, or more oil, or that a light is out — which is easy to fix in a car because it comes with an instruction manual.

If only we came with a handy instruction manual too! But there is a way to understand your anxiety — you just need to listen.

Looking back, I can see that anxiety had always been there for me but I didn't acknowledge it because it didn't hold me back from my goals. That doesn't mean to say that it didn't affect me — you can't hide from your feelings. Instead, I dialled out with being busy, drinking alcohol, bingeing on sugar, over exercising or being hyper-focused on my goals.

This kept me out of my body, so that I didn't have to hear what the low level, yet consistent discomfort of this anxiety was trying to tell me. What if it wasn't something to be afraid of? Yes, it's true: anxiety can be your friend.

MentalHealth UK reported that over 8 million people are experiencing an anxiety disorder at any one time (Mental Health UK). Of course there is a sliding scale: anxiety can be a crippling monster for some or a subtle shadow for others. Wherever you find yourself on this scale, the anxious feeling is trying to tell you something more. Lean in

and you'll breakthrough and discover it. But, firstly, why are you not listening to it?

If you ignored the warning light on your car, it would eventually stop working in some way. Usually, our first reaction to a warning light is one of frustration because we know this will entail effort, time and quite possibly money. But we know that we need our car and that it would be foolish to ignore it. It deserves your attention. It's time to do things differently.

When I help clients with anxiety, what I find is that the cause tends to be unhealed trauma. It's the past showing up in the present, or a way of being that isn't true to who we are. When left unaddressed, this causes us to stay stuck in negative behaviours that don't make sense. And then we become stuck.

I recently watched *Take Your Pills: Xanax on Netflix*. I once took to Xanax to help me sleep during the years that my son wasn't sleeping. It was helpful, but I felt that it was dangerous. I am by no means saying that receiving medical help isn't a valid path, it's just not always the full solution.

A client of mine had struggled with anxiety for years and she strongly identified with being an anxious person. She would tell me time and time again: "I am an anxious person, it's who I am". And it was affecting her both at work and at home.

From working on myself, I've learned that we have to be very careful with the labels we decide to stick on ourselves. Anything that follows "I am" is a very strong statement that may keep you stuck to being that way.

I asked my client whether she could start with changing her language from "I am

an anxious person" to "I am experiencing anxiety in this moment" because she didn't experience it all of the time. I wanted her to find more truth in her statement. As soon as you say "I am something" it makes it harder to change. She didn't want to feel anxious, so we needed to create space for the change to occur.

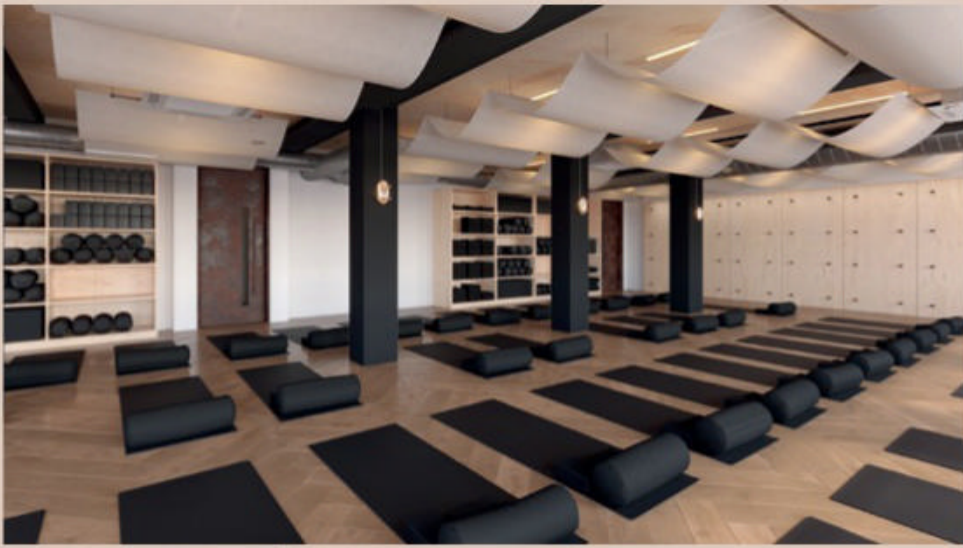
We worked together for around a year and it was a few months after this that she messaged out of the blue delighted to share that she no longer identifies as an anxious person. She did not feel that was who she was anymore. The anxiety had become so intermittent, she would move through it with ease as she knew it was an 'experience' and not 'who she was'.

She arrived at this point because she listened to her warning signals. Just as you'd take your car to the garage, she brought herself to me and together we were able to uncover what was going on beneath the surface that she wasn't aware of, that needed her attention.

In this case, limiting beliefs, unhealed trauma, wounds from childhood playing out in adulthood — and a lot of things that were not even her own, that, in fact, belonged to her parents.

This is just one example. You don't have to live with anxiety, there is most certainly a way out. Just remember: you are not an anxious person, anxiety is something you're experiencing. How you feel today can and will change. 🌀

To connect with Lydia Kimmerling and find out more about living a spiritually-guided life, say hello on Instagram @lydiakimmerling



Mission possible

New London studio space opens in Spitalfields

Introducing Mission, a new yoga space that's making a big splash in London's trendy Spitalfields area after opening in March.

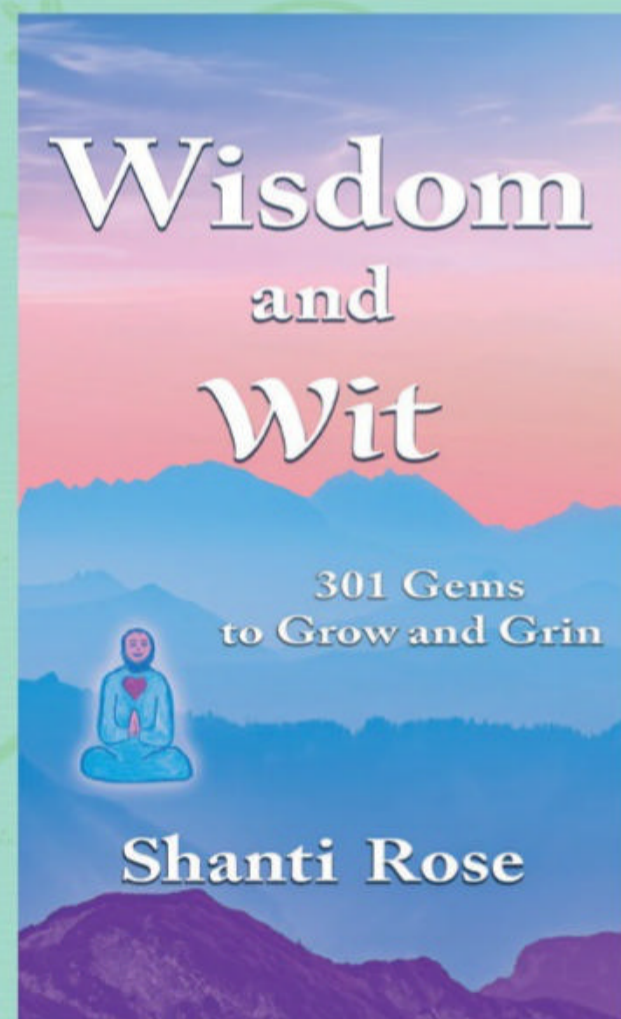
Set in a four-storey, 15,000 sq ft Victorian warehouse, it claims to be the largest of its kind in Europe, boasting five lofty studios, three treatment rooms, a sauna and a relaxed restaurant with a rooftop terrace overlooking the City's skyline.

Mission's founders, Genny Wilkinson Priest and Simon Davies, hope to create an inviting space that welcomes everyone: the bendy, the stiff, the beginner, the expert, the introverts and the extroverts.

"Our aim with Mission is to shatter the exclusionary barriers that stop people from practicing yoga or other forms of movement," said Wilkinson Priest. "We are curating an inclusive home that is free of dogma, free of rules and full of acceptance."

After all the studio closures and devastation caused by the lockdowns in recent years it's a big breath of fresh air for London's studio scene too. Welcome to the Mission!

Find out more at: mission-e1.com



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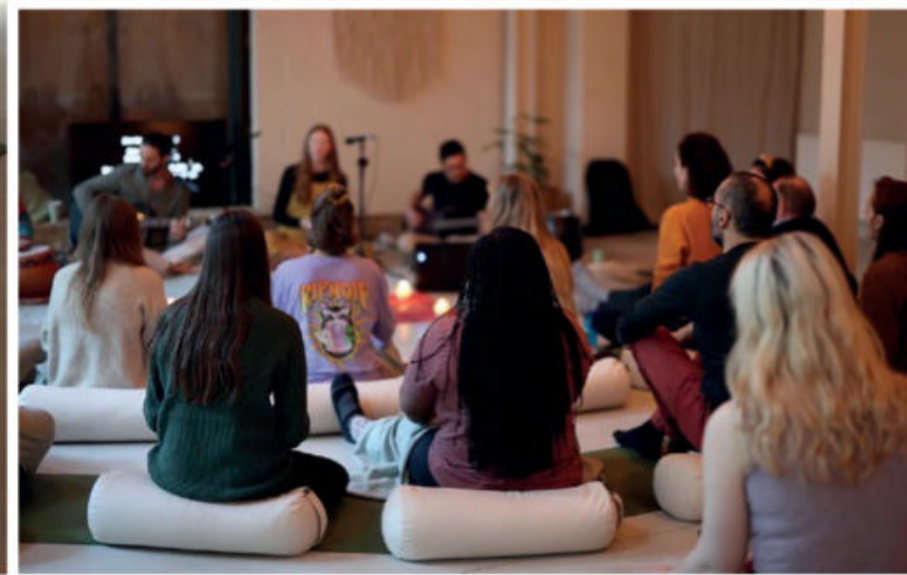
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Wonderful Things is a beautiful, cosy space in east London, home to a variety of wellbeing and spiritual practices. It is affordable, friendly, with a number of tools for people to hold space in their own, unique way.

It was founded by a couple, Liza Degtiarenko and Jonny Fren, with the intention to create a little sanctuary in a part of London that didn't have any spaces of its kind before. Jonny is passionate about creating inspiring physical spaces, and Liza is a yoga teacher and a space holder who wants to create safe, nourishing experiences that

encourage people to connect with themselves and with each other.

"We opened Wonderful Things as we wanted local residents to have somewhere they can come to take a breath, to allow themselves to slow down and disconnect from their otherwise fast-paced London life and to connect with themselves and with the community," says Jonny. "We also wanted London space holders to have an affordable place where they can share their offerings and gather with their own communities."

As for the physical space, it was important for the couple to create



an environment that would feel as natural as possible within a building in London, as well as to make it sustainable and respectful to nature. The entire space is lovingly hand-made by Jonny using sustainable and recycled wood, soft linens and plants. “We use eco-friendly, vegan cleaning materials, offer organic teas and fresh filtered water, send no waste to landfill, and we are powered by 100% renewable energy.”

Yoga teachers, space holders and facilitators appreciate Wonderful Things for its personal approach and human connection as they deal with the founders of the space directly, the beautiful and safe energy of the place that they feel instantly walking in through the door, as well as how affordable it is.

“Another intention we had when creating Wonderful Things was for it to enable people to create gatherings and events they

feel called to offer without it being stressful or creating too much financial pressure,” says Liza. “Our approachable rates have allowed many space holders who are at the beginning of their journey to start offering spaces their heart was calling for.”

Jonny adds: “We have also held many established retreats and events. Not only is the space beautiful with a special energy and feel to it, it’s also easily accessible by public transport which makes it a good location for people coming from different areas of London and surrounding areas. Our facilities allow a variety of events to be held at the space, including day retreats, workshops and conscious celebrations.” ॐ

Get the Wonderful Things vibe on Instagram @wonderfulthings.space



The Stix Remotes

Tech-for-good start-up Stix Mindfulness has launched a new product with the aim to support children's mental wellbeing through fun, interactive mindfulness activities. Its new device, The Stix Remotes, guides youngsters through a variety of fun, therapeutic activities involving balancing, deep breathing, guided meditations and more. It comprises two interactive remotes, one held in each hand, that guide the child through activities such as 'Belly Breathing' and 'Ball of Light'. The Stix Remotes monitor their movements and provide feedback through audio-based instructions, lights and vibrations to keep them focused and engaged. Children can track progress and earn age appropriate rewards via the Stix app, encouraging continued practice through positive reinforcement.

£159
stixmindfulness.co.uk



Joy Meditation Candle

Bring joy into your home with this natural soywax candle from Kati Kaia, handmade in the UK, and available from The Positive Company. With pure essential oils, ylang ylang and patchouli it will transform your yoga space into a temple in an instant. Approx. 40 hours burn time.

£25
thepositive.co



Choose Happiness Planner

The Happiness Planner was created by positive psychologist Megan Price to help people to become the happiest versions of themselves. The 12-week planner, which comes in yellow, blue, and green, brings decades of research into the science of wellbeing into a fun interactive journal and begins with mindset work, designed to help you find your values and priorities. It offers space for you to journal weekly (by setting your non-negotiables and what's most important) and twice daily (each page has a two-page spread to allow you to check in each morning and evening). Crammed with scientifically proven interventions to boost your mood, wellbeing, and happiness levels.

£33
happybyme.co.uk

Powda Illuminating & Brightening Facemask

Powda Beauty is a new London-based brand that makes vegan, natural, luxury algae peel-off facemasks to deliver the ultimate at-home spa experience. The Illuminating & Brightening mask contains powerful botanical extracts proven to revitalise skin with a luminous, radiant glow. Algae are called the ocean's 'most potent secret' because they are rich in antioxidants and protect the skin from free radicals that cause premature ageing. Also, high in vitamins, proteins and amino acid. The quick way to get your glow on!

£9.99
powda.co





Courbe d'Energy Yoga Mat

Get your stretch on with the Courbe d'Energy yoga mat from Ladina Yoga, a London-based mindful yoga brand with a mission to empower African artists through sustainable yoga gear. This particular mat was designed by Jessi Avila, a promising artist from Madagascar. Having grown up in one of the poorest countries in the world, Jessi's work is inspired from overcoming his inner fears and shining a light on positivity by using bright primary colours and patterns. For each yoga mat purchased, Ladina Yoga plants a mangrove tree in Madagascar, the fourth most deforested country in the world.

£75
ladinayoga.com



One Breath Tote Bag

Introducing the One Breath Tote Bag from Yogipod, an authentic small yoga firm. Big enough to carry all the props you could need for practice at the studio, gym or community centre, it also has a clever sleeve to hold your yoga mat and includes a handwritten reminder to take life gently and live 'one breath at a time'. Hand screen printed by another small business in Manchester. C'mon, support the little guys!

£22
yogipod.co.uk

Weleda Skin Food

Weleda Skin Food is a universal saviour of dry, rough skin on faces, elbows, hands and feet. Wherever you take a lot out of your skin, let Skin Food put it back in! With extracts of gentle viola tricolour, calendula and chamomile, in a rich, thick base of oils and beeswax, Skin Food loves your skin back to its best. Available from Boots, Holland & Barrett and all good health stores.

£12.50
weleda.com



Truthpaste Original Range

Mixing modern research with ancient knowledge, Truthpaste is a self-care system that will refresh your mouth and your mind. Flouride-free and plastic-free, the natural zero waste toothpastes are available in strong and fresh adult flavours, such as Peppermint & Spearmint; Fennel; and Peppermint & Wintergreen. Sweet, milder flavours also available for kids. With 100ml lasting one person up to three months, Truthpaste is great for the planet and your wallet! New, natural probiotic mouthwash also being launched this month.

£10
truthpaste.co.uk

Planet yoga

Stories from around the weird and wonderful world of yoga



USA: Healthy cities

San Francisco is the healthiest city in the USA, followed by Miami and San Diego, according to rankings by tech platform Mindbody. It compiled the Top 10 Healthiest Cities in America list as part of the 2023 Mindbody Wellness Index, based on key criteria such as physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, environmental, social, and occupational. Mindbody surveyed 17,000 adults in the 50 most populated US cities and ranked them from healthiest to least through an algorithm. San Francisco scored well as the most non-smoking city in America, with a high number of residents who exercise 90 minutes or more per week, with the most popular workout being yoga.

USA: Yoga for heroes

A new programme by the nonprofit Paralyzed Veterans of America, incorporating everything from movement to mindfulness, is helping ill and injured veterans and their loved ones become the best version of themselves. It includes 'Vinyasa Yoga for Adaptive Athletes', focusing on building strength, flexibility, balance, relaxation, and stress management. Other components include strength training and health and wellness coaching. The PVA works with veterans with spinal cord injury or diseases. "The programme is designed to... bring greater awareness to the incredible benefits that physical activity and mental resilience provide to a person's overall health," said Charles Brown, national president.



UK: Journey of the mind

Nottingham’s New Art Exchange is still hosting Journey of the Mind, hailed as an ‘exhibition of self-discovery’, which combines Sikh teachings and storytelling to encourage visitors to think about their own minds to help improve mental wellbeing. Featuring figurative drawings and digitally-created paintings by world-renowned Sikh artist Kanwar Singh, and short films by British animator Christian Wood, it explores the stories of those who historically attained the highest spiritual levels. The exhibition also poses the question: what is the medicine that can heal the mind? The aim is to help people find solutions on how they can improve their own mental wellness. The exhibition opened in January and runs through to 22 April.



UK: Yoga United

Footballers discovered the many benefits of yoga years ago, but now more and more clubs are embedding it into their DNA. Manchester United are reportedly planning an overhaul of their famed Carrington training base, which will include a new wellness suite, where players can do yoga. According to newspaper reports, the revamp is partly in response to criticism from former player, Cristiano Ronaldo, who claimed little had changed at the club since he left after his first spell there in 2009. Manchester United have not won a Premier League title since Sir Alex Ferguson's final season in charge 10 years ago — let’s see if the new yoga centre can make a difference!

India: By presidential decree

India’s president Droupadi Murmu said that yoga has helped her get over both mental and physical pain. During a recent visit to the state of Orissa, she called on others to practice regularly to nurture spiritual growth, which will, in turn, further the overall development of individuals and the nation as a whole. “At one point in time, I felt completely broken, both physically and mentally, and embarked on yoga,” she was quoted as saying by Indian press. “I am here today...just because of yoga.” Murmu suffered a series of bereavements in a short period a few years ago, losing her two sons, husband, and brother. “One needs to strive for purification of the body, mind, and soul and spiritual awakening,” she added.



SILVERWIND *style*

Introducing the latest collection from SILVERWIND, a yoga and activewear brand that draws inspiration from nature to create a high performance, colourful and sustainable premium collection with high-street style, made from recycled waste. The new eco-friendly* collection is made from RPET, a fabric made from recycled plastic bottles, and also boasts anti-microbial qualities...perfect for washing less and wearing more! "Our purpose is to inspire people to live sustainably, to protect our world's oceans and plants, as well as providing incredible eco-friendly styles to help people achieve their goals," Katherine Zeng, co-founder of SILVERWIND, tells OM.

Inspired by the bohemian spirit of freedom, passion, and romance, the designer extracted the free and flowing form of water with the white silhouette of butterflies to show the tenderness of female figures, then paired this element with the contrasting warm geometry to represent reinforcement and strength. Just like the Adaline from Greek Mythology story - who is gentle, kind and beautiful outside, but tough and strong inside.

High-waisted flares: £55

Strappy top: £39

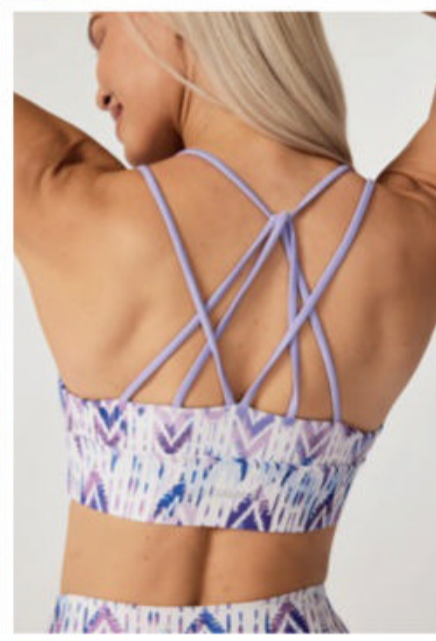
** Both products and packaging are 100% sustainable and Silverwind donates to Ocean Conservancy with every sale.*

oversized sweatshirt: £55
 jogger: £43
 XS - XXL
 Cosmic latte and calm blue



Freedom, passion and amour. Romantic and mysterious hues of lavender and sapphire combine into freely-arranged diamond patterns for a full-on bohemian vibe. This print is a standalone stunner, designed for beautiful belles.

High-waisted flares: £55
 Strappy top: £39



Made from 78% TERYLENE / 22% SPANDEX. These 'HeyCloud' fabrics are ultra soft & lightweight, and feel just like clouds! Four-way stretch for a move-with-you feel. Moisture-wicking, breathable and anti-bacterial.

High-waisted pocket leggings in sage green and light blue: £47
 Front twist mesh back bra in sage green and light blue: £31



Peaceful colours, graceful vibes and harmonious feelings. The print features a beautiful picture of the grass swaying in the wind and showing vitality under the nourishment from the earth and rain. The forest goddess, patroness of forests and animals, rises from the moving grass to celebrate female power and praise the contribution women make to society.

High-waisted leggings: £51
 Strappy bra: £36.25



ॐ om beginnings

The Infinity print features an abstract desert, clear moon and mysterious galaxy, representing the revelation, illumination and unknown, respectively. With a mystical and calming palette of purple, this haute spiritual-inspired print is worthy of your meditation time, to deeply reconnect with your inner self and engage your infinite strength inside you.

High-waisted leggings: £51

Reversible two-way bra: £43



Inspired by the characteristics of perseverance in the herb Ilex Pubescens, the designer draws a picture of the herb growing in the severe cold and showing its tenacious vitality to symbolize strength and tenacity.

Floral Shoulder Tie Long Sleeve Top: £47.50



Inspired by Noah's Ark, the patterns are a combination of an olive branch and maple poplar to represent lushness and life. The warm earthy hue is adopted to create a sense of purity and peace.

High-waisted leggings: £50

Weave back bra: £39



PURSUE YOUR PASSION LEARN TO TEACH YOGA FOR KIDS



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Bring joy, well-being, and kindness to kids of all ages through the magic of yoga and experiential learning.

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ॐ om yoga show 2023

OM Yoga Show

2023

OM YOGA SHOW
13th, 14th & 15th
October 2023

Alexandra Palace, London
omyogashow.com



With only six months to go until the OM Yoga Show, here's a taste of some of the exciting things to come... including the inaugural OM Awards! We'll be bringing you more news and developments, including all the top teachers you can expect to see, over the coming months as we countdown to this year's event at London's Alexandra Palace

We're so excited about this year's OM Yoga Show! The return of the London show last year was a huge success. After an absence of three long years, it was a great way for the yoga community to come together and reconnect once more. Thousands of yogis all under one roof doing what they love the most — yoga!

This year, we've got even more incredible new things to share with you, including the inaugural OM Yoga Awards (see details on page 29). That's something you definitely don't want to miss.

We are also thrilled to announce that international yoga star Kino MacGregor will be joining us at the OM Yoga Show 2023 — her very first visit to the show! With over 1 million followers on Instagram and over 800,000 subscribers on YouTube

and Facebook, her message of spiritual strength reaches people all over the world. And now it is your turn to practice with her in person!

The American Ashtanga teacher is also the founder of Omstars, the world's first yoga TV network, as well as an inspirational speaker, entrepreneur and author. The Miami native is happiest on the beach with a fresh coconut, and a poet at heart who always stops to smell the flowers. Come and soak up the Florida sunshine at the show this year!

Tickets for Kino MacGregor's workshop will be on sale on 8th April, but OM subscribers can get early access on 1st April! Remember: tickets will be popular and are limited, so if this is one you don't want to miss make sure your subscription to OM magazine is active and up to date.



Workshops galore!

A guide to some of the many workshops taking place over the weekend. Stay tuned for more

HEART POWER

The Power of the Heart: a Low Deep & Mindful Flow with Mellara Gold

Since ancient times, great masters and sacred traditions have given voice to the power of our human heart. In this session, you'll learn how to tap into the energy of the heart through yoga asana, mantra and breathing techniques for greater health, life balance and inner peace. Your guide in this workshop, Mellara Gold, loves combining yogic wisdom and classical postures with a focus on structural alignment inside the flow. May we lean into our practice, be it at any stage of our life, and face our challenges with an open heart and flexible spine. See you on the mat! To deepen this practice please feel free to bring along 2 blocks, a strap and blanket (optional).

Sunday 15th October, 2023



AUTHENTIC YOGA

Authentic Indian Yoga, Pranayama & Mantra with Ravi Dixit

Join this workshop where you'll go back to the very roots of yoga as taught in India. Ravi Dixit is an Indian yoga instructor living in London who is passionate about sharing the essence of traditional yoga and making it relatable for all. Learn about connecting with yourself through the practice of pranayama, asana and mantra. You'll also explore how to honour the traditions of yoga and learn the historic origins of the practice and how these can be applied in the modern world. Ravi Dixit is OM's regular Man on the Mat contributor. Read more about his own yoga journey in this issue, starting on page 80.

Sunday 15th October, 2023



HEALTH & HEDONISM

VOGA with Juju Murrell

Welcome to the House of VOGA: a boutique fitness method, born out of a love of Ibiza, house music, Vogue, and 80s pop culture. VOGA is fitness and fashion fused with yoga and dance, mixing breath-synchronised movement with stylised body talk. It's the perfect balance of health and hedonism, offering a holistic, cardio workout that guarantees results! As an art director turned fitness influencer, founder Juju Morrell created it as a stylised wellbeing experience designed to empower all. As it's House of Voga's 10-year anniversary, we're excited to celebrate it with the team of Voguettes and Juju herself live at the show this year.

Friday 13th October, 2023



Get your tickets now

The earlier you book, the more you save!

Save 50% on entrance tickets

1 Day Ticket - £20 £10

2 Day Ticket - £36 £18

3 Day Ticket - £48 £24

Offer ends: 31st March

Children under 16 (accompanied by a paying adult) are FREE

Buy your tickets now at omyogashow.com

WORKSHOP TICKETS

- General sale for workshop tickets begins 8th April
- OM subscribers get Exclusive Early Access on 1st April



Memories from OM Yoga Show *2022*



"Where do I start? I just loved the fact that I was part of the event. Teaching yoga is a passion and to allow one's passion to permeate to others is an absolute joy. Cannot wait for OM Yoga Show 2023 — it will be absolutely epic!"

Nadeem



"Totally loved spending the day with so many beautiful friends and all amongst the yogis of England" @nichola_loves



"This weekend @omyogashow there was such a wonderful feeling of community. I can't tell you how many wonderful interactions I had with some really lovely people" @anneheigham

"I had such a brilliant time at the @omyogashow yesterday! The first thing I did was to sign up for @omyogamagazine - I really find the magazine so invaluable for my learning and teaching" @thislittleyogini



"I loved the yoga show last year, nice atmosphere and plenty to see and do for free. The event brought my school buddy (Elaine) and I together for the first time in 20-plus years — that and our love of yoga! The yoga rave was pretty good too! Well done OM for another amazing day."

Becky (and Elaine)





omyoga & lifestyle

AWARDS 2023

OM YOGA AWARDS 2023

Do you have a favourite yoga teacher or studio who you think deserves a bit of recognition? Let us know!

At this year's show, we'll be launching the very first OM Yoga Awards, a brand new awards scheme to recognise some of the incredible people and talent in the yoga world.

After a few tough years for everybody, including the yoga community, we want to do our bit to help celebrate the wonderful people, places and businesses who embrace and embody the amazing gift that is yoga.

Help us to help the true champions of the yoga world. There are nine awards categories and we'd love you to take part in the nominations, which are open 31st March until 1st June, 2023 (so get in quick!).

As well as nominating your favourite teacher, retreat or studio, there are also awards for yoga charities, yoga mats, clothing brands, teacher trainers, and online yoga providers. The final award is the OM Yoga Good Karma Award 2023.

Here, we're looking for an unsung hero in the yoga community, someone who is helping others, dedicating time and effort to helping their yoga community in some way. This person can be based in the UK or overseas. This is a special category, and the only one that will not go to a public vote — the winner will be selected by OM editor Martin Clark.

It promises to be a celebration of yoga and provide a bit of recognition for those amazing people and places that are out there changing people's lives, each and every day. Be sure to get involved!



Nominations: the small print

Nominations open 31st March 2023 and close 1st June 2023. Once nominations have closed, the top five nominations in each category will then be shortlisted and you will then be able to vote for your favourite. Once the shortlists are created, then final voting opens 1st July. Winners will be announced on Saturday 14th October 2023 at the OM Yoga Lecture Stage, at the OM Yoga Show.

THE AWARDS



1. Favourite Yoga Teacher
2. Favourite Yoga Studio
3. Favourite Yoga Teacher Trainer
4. Favourite Online Yoga Platform/App
5. Favourite Yoga Mat
6. Favourite Yoga Clothing Brand
7. Favourite Yoga Charity
8. Favourite Yoga Retreat Company
9. OM Yoga Good Karma Award



VOTE NOW: For details on how to vote, and more information on the categories, head to: ommagazine.com/om-yoga-awards



Balancing souls

Here we move within a standing sequence to find our centre of gravity through the soles of our feet — our beloved balancing ‘souls’. Can you quieten your mind, while the physical self surrenders into the earth’s core? By Isabel Lankester

Watch the mini session with Isabel Lankester on the OM website or app, brought to you in partnership with Isabel Lankester Yoga. Visit isabellankesteryoga.com for the full-length class, plus 100+ more on-demand and live stream classes.

During this practice we shall explore a variety of standing balances to feel into all four corners of our feet, those precious foundations to our physical asana. Balancing poses are challenging, but with practice they become easier. The key is consistency, focus and patience. Remember to take your time, make sure you are practicing on a flat, firm surface and take a few blocks as props if you’re feeling a little tight in the hamstrings. A great practice for all levels.

1. Half-Way Lift (Ardha Uttanasana)

Begin in standing at the top of your mat (samasthiti, image not shown), hands at your heart, eyes closed. Take a deep breath in and exhale into the soles of your feet. Feel a slight spreading of your toes as you focus the mind inwards. Begin to study your internal environment; notice how your mind feels at ease as you draw weight equally into both feet.

Now open your eyes, inhale and reach your arms upwards to urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, not shown), exhale as you forward fold to uttanasana (standing forward bend, not shown). Start to inhale towards a half-way lift of the spine (ardha uttanasana). Feel your navel draw upwards towards the spine; there is an extension forward of the chest as you lean back into your heels.

Now start to step back into plank, exhale lower the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra (bhujangasana, not shown). Press into the front of your feet and lengthen into your crown. Exhale start to draw back into downward-facing dog (adho mukha svanasana, not shown) where you can walk out your legs by alternatively bending your knees. This will also drive awareness into the soles of the feet. We are nearly ready for our first balance!



2. Knees Up Balance

When you are ready make your way to the top of your mat, remain in a forward fold, inhale to ardha uttanasana, before releasing the spine completely in uttanasana (not shown). Inhale, press into your feet and raise your arms over head, looking towards your thumbs in urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, not shown). Exhale bring the hands back to your heart, begin to settle your breathing. Calm down your nervous system by gazing at one point on the wall ahead, your drishti, or gaze point. Keep your eyes on this point, as you press hard into your right foot. Start to raise your left knee to your chest (Knee up). Find your balance here as you pause for four or five breaths. Of course, if you need extra stability, place one hand on a wall for balance. Remember: this is your first standing balance so take it easy, be at peace with a gentle wobble. If you fall, come straight back in. Once completed, repeat this one-legged balance on your left foot, bringing the right knee to your chest.



3 - Virabhadrasana 1

3. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana 1)

To reset the body again press into both feet and raise your arms overhead, looking towards your thumbs in urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, not shown). Exhale, bring the hands back to your heart. Calm your breathing. Keep your hands at your heart as you take a big step backwards with your left leg, entering warrior 1 (virabhadrasana 1). With the right knee bent and the left leg extending, press actively down the left heel, and left inner arch of your foot. Even though you are pressing into both feet, the gaze upwards to your thumbs adds a little extra balance here.

4. Humble Warrior (Baddha Virabhadrasana)

After taking a few breaths, start to interlace the fingers behind your back, take an inhale, look upwards and prepare for humble warrior (baddha virabhadrasana). Heel toe the right foot slightly further outwards so you have space in your hips to forward fold towards to earth.

This pose offers us a chance to delve into the mind: notice what pops up when you are asked to hold this position. Can you surrender into the earth and find mental ease as you press evenly down in both feet? There is a huge array of benefits to this asana, opening the hips and heart, as well as lengthening down the left hamstring and calf muscle. Can you soften as you release the back of your neck?

After taking a few breaths, inhale and reach your arms back up to a warrior 1. Place your hands to your heart, step forward to the top of your mat and repeat the sequence on the left foot as you step back with your right leg into a warrior 1. Here, you'll move through warrior 1 and humble warrior on the left leg. After you've completed this side, place your hands down to the top of your mat and step back into downward-facing dog (adho mukha svanasana, not shown) where you can shake out your hips and pedal out your legs to reset your body for the final chapter of this flow.



4 - Baddha Virabhadrasana



5 - Parivrtta Hasta Padangushthasana

5. Revolved Standing Hand To Big Toe Pose (Parivrtta Hasta Padangushthasana)

When you're ready, make your way to the top of the mat, remain in a forward fold, inhale to ardha uttanasana, before releasing the spine completely in uttanasana (not shown). Inhale, press into your feet and raise your arms over head, looking towards your thumbs in urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, not shown). Exhale, bring the hands back to your heart, and begin to settle your breathing.

Just as we have practiced before, start to gaze at one point on the wall ahead - your drishti. Keep the eyes on this point, as you press hard into your right foot. Start to raise your left knee to your chest and begin to turn your torso to the left. Can you take your left hand to your hip and place your right hand across the left knee. When you begin to feel more balanced, turn your eyes to the left hand side and reach your left hand back behind you, this will intensify the twist of your spine. This is the modified version of Parivrtta Hasta Padangushthasana (revolved standing hand to big toe pose). If you want to move to the extended version, straighten out the left leg in your standing pose and place the right hand across the left foot. It's important to press actively downwards into the right leg as you grow tall into your spine and outwards through the top of your head.

Stay committed to this pose as you breathe slowly for five breaths. Then repeat this asana on the left leg.



6. Pyramid Pose (Parsvottanasana)

To close this standing balance, release both feet to the floor. Inhale and reach your arms upwards to urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, not shown), exhale as you forward fold to uttanasana (standing forward bend, not shown). Start to inhale towards a half-way lift of the back (ardha uttanasana). Here we now lean into the palms (option to use blocks under the hands), press into the right foot and step back with the left foot. Find a super stretch down the back of your right leg; this should serve as a good counter stretch from your active balances.

Inhale extend the spine upwards before exhaling and folding deeply into the floor below into pyramid pose (parsvottanasana). Please don't worry if your legs are not straight, as the emphasis is on lengthening the spine and legs. See if you can soften through the outer edges of your feet in this passive stretch. Hold for four or five breaths before repeating on the right leg.

Once you have practiced pyramid on both sides, step into downward-facing dog. Inhale and roll the spine into plank, exhale, lower the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra (bhujangasana, not shown). Press into the front of your feet and lengthen into your crown. Exhale start to draw back into downward-facing dog where you can walk out your legs by alternatively bending your knees.

7. Dancer Pose (Natarajasana)

Are you ready for your final standing balance? When you're ready, make your way to the top of your mat, remain in a forward fold, inhale to ardha uttanasana before releasing the spine completely in uttanasana. Inhale, press into your feet and raise your arms over head, looking towards your thumbs in urdhva hastasana (upwards salute). Exhale, bring the hands back to your heart, begin to settle your breathing.

Finally, start to gaze at one point on the wall ahead, your drishti. Keep your eyes on this point, as you press hard into your right foot. Start to lift the left foot behind you and take hold of it with the left hand, reach your right hand forward into dancer pose. This will counter balance the left leg drawing back. Can you actively press the foot into the hand to help stabilise the hips and extend the spine? Option to hold the wall for extra support and hold for four or five breaths.

Replace the right foot back to the floor, take a moment to study the effects of the balance in both feet before practicing on the other side.

After finishing the pose on the left side, close your balancing practice in standing at the top of your mat. Hands to heart, take a slow breath in, hold, and exhale. ॐ



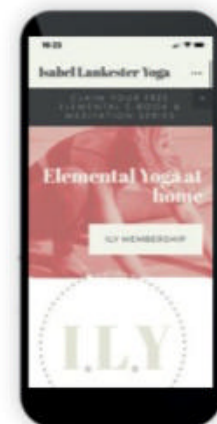
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13 14 15 October 2023

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www.MindBodySoul.show



A **360°** overview of...
Locust Pose (Salabhasana)
With Dr Kiki Morriss

Locust Pose (Salabhasana)

Locust Pose is a backbend that calls for considerable strength in your back and leg muscles. It opens your chest and improves your posture, which is particularly beneficial if you have spent time hunched over a computer. As you breathe in the pose, stretch your upper body forwards and your legs back.

LOCUST POSE (SALABHASANA)

SALABHA = LOCUST OR GRASSHOPPER

ASANA = POSTURE

MOVING INTO THE POSE

- Lie on your front (in a prone position) with your legs and feet together.
- Rest your arms by your sides with your palms facing upwards.
- Inhale and lift your head, chest and legs as high as possible without causing strain to your lower back.
- Breathe steadily in the pose for 30 seconds.
- Exhale and lower down.
- Rest in Child's Pose.

FOCUS YOUR GAZE

- Your focal point (drishti) is at a fixed point straight ahead of you.
- Alternatively, try gazing at the tip of your nose or close your eyes.

LEGS & HIPS

- Use your quadriceps to straighten your knees.
- Keep your legs together.
- Avoid the tendency to turn your lower legs outwards.
- Keep your knees facing downwards.
- Use your gluteus maximus to extend your hips.

- Use your hamstrings to lift your thighs.
- Use your gastrocnemius and soleus muscles to flex your feet. This will make your feet face upwards.

SHOULDERS & BACK

- Use your infraspinatus and teres minor muscles (part of rotator cuff) to externally rotate your shoulders.
- Use your trapezius to lower your shoulder blades down your back.
- The above two actions will act to open across your chest.
- Keep your shoulders soft and maintain space between them and your ears, keeping your neck long.
- Use your erector spinae and quadratus lumborum muscles to extend your back and open your chest.
- Distribute the back bend along the entire length of your spine. Avoid putting pressure on your lower back.

ARMS & HANDS

- Press the backs of your hands into the mat to help lift your chest.

FACE

- Keep your chin parallel to the floor.

- Relax your jaw and the point between your eyebrows.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens your back muscles.
- Strengthens your gluteal muscles and hamstrings.
- Opens your chest.
- Improves your posture.

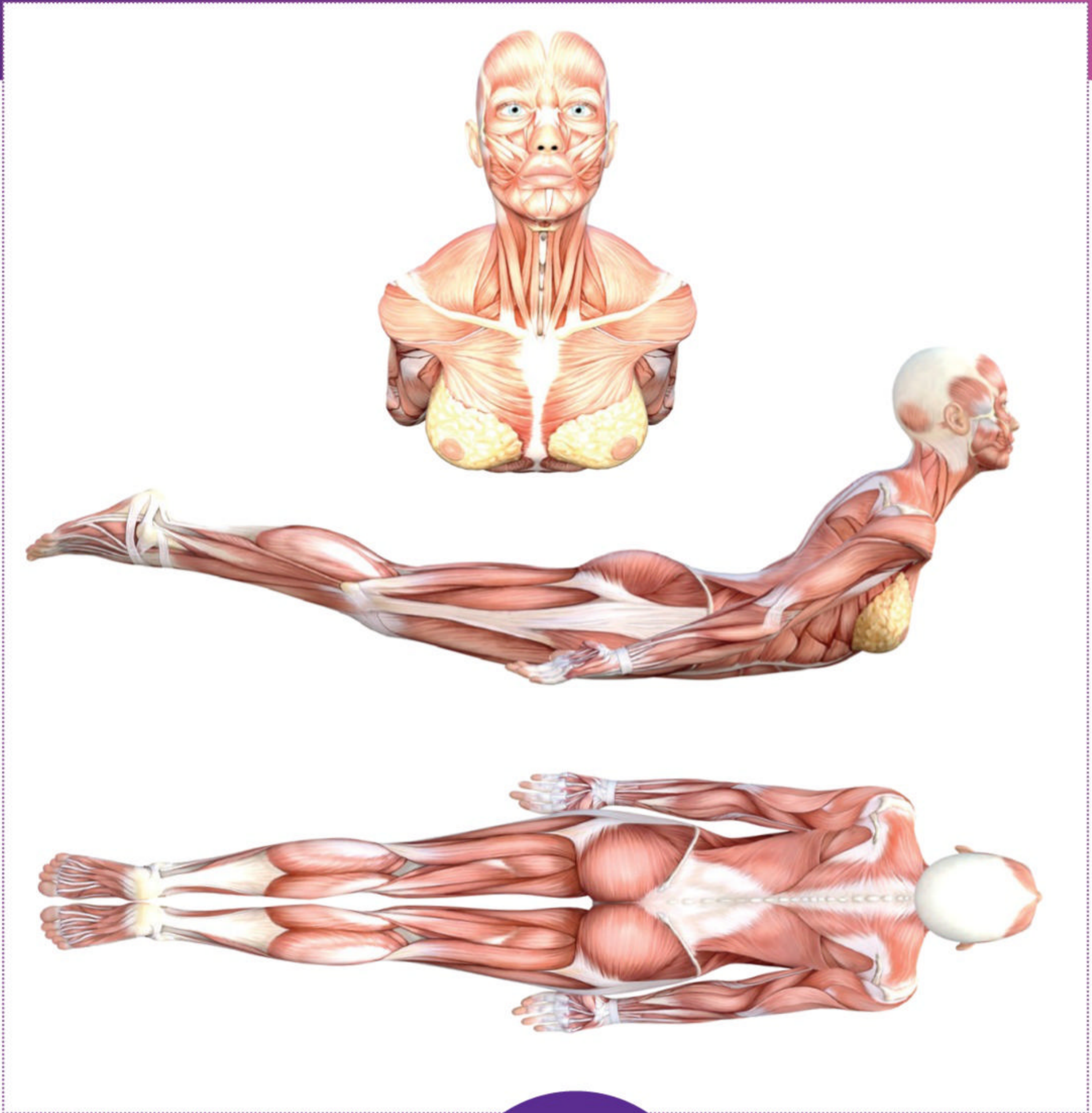
VARIATIONS

There are a number of variations for your arms in Locust Pose:

- Lift your arms parallel to the floor and stretch them back.
- Link your fingers behind your back and lift your arms up.
- Reach your arms forwards with your palms facing down.
- Bend your legs in the pose and lift them higher and higher.
- Lift your legs alternately off the ground.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Avoid the pose if you have a neck or back injury or issue.
- Avoid the pose if you have a hernia.



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Doctor Kiki Morriss is a medical doctor, yoga teacher and author of 'Nurturing Your Family With Yoga.' Visit: primrosehillyoga.com or Instagram @kiki.yoga

OM meets...



ISABEL LANKESTER

You can practice with Isabel Lankester in our Yoga at Home sequence each month (see page 26). Here, she tells OM a little more about her own yoga backstory and how the practice reminds us how we are all perfectly imperfect!

How did you first get into yoga?

I first found yoga whilst living in London. A great friend of mine had just qualified as a teacher and she was giving a small group of us 1-2-1 sessions. I became completely hooked after feeling the mental benefits of the practice; it made me stronger in body and mind. It has also helped to provide a strong sense of balance in my life. I often rely on my practice to find my centre, gain perspective and feel gratitude for my own body.

What does yoga give you personally?

A strong connection to my body. I struggled with an eating disorder during my early teens and 20s. Yoga helped me mend a rather broken relationship I was having with my body. I am now more nourishing, more compassionate, more loving to my own self when I practice. This, in turn, helps me teach with the same compassion to my students...we are all walking each other home.

How do you feel before and after a practice?

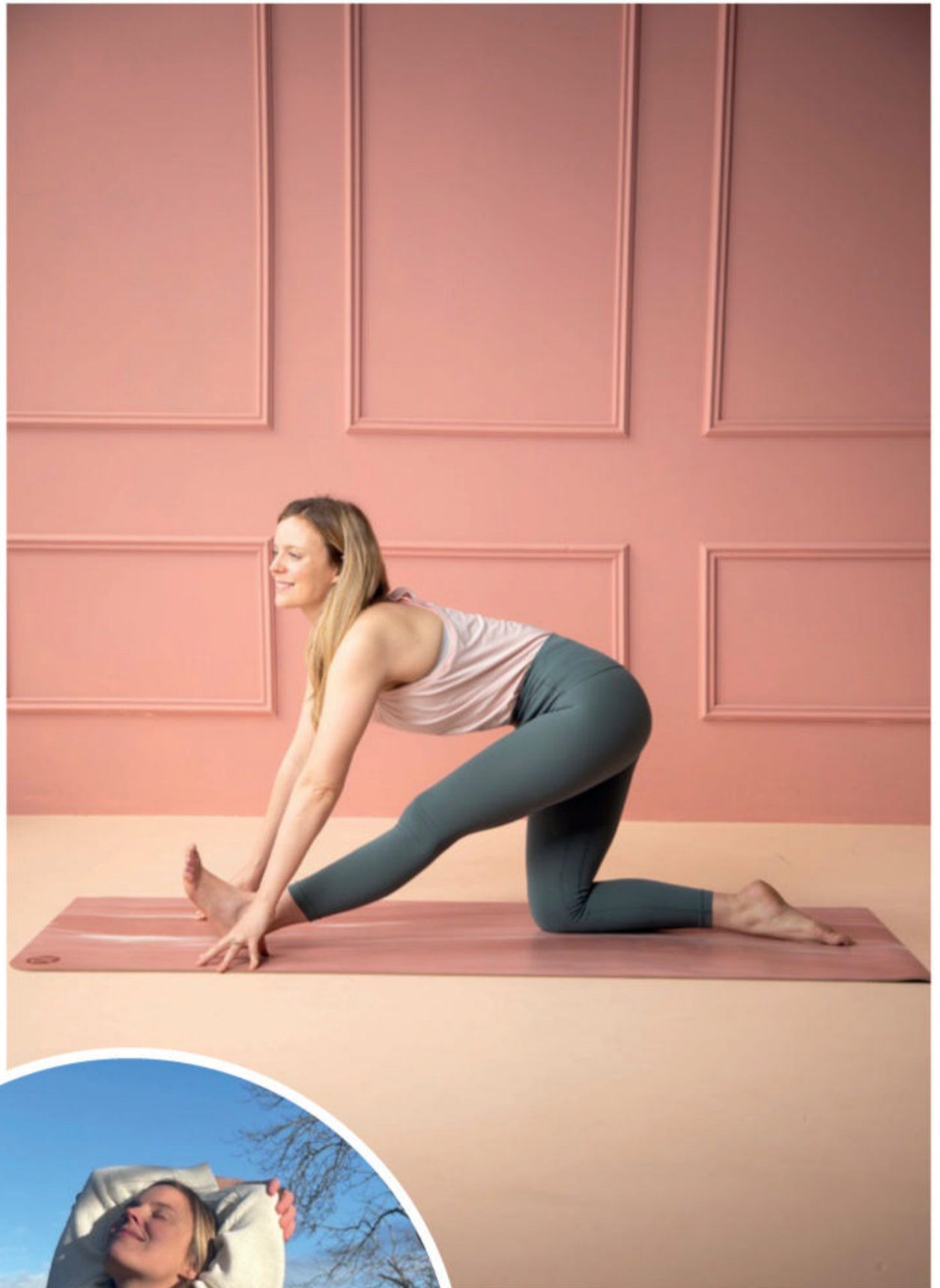
After I practice — whether it is my physical asana or meditation practice — there is a huge amount of relief associated with how I feel afterwards. My husband can often tell if I have had time on my mat! I can broaden my perspective, rather than rushing; I can yield my body and mind into day-to-day activities. Now, with two small children at home, I often feel grateful for any time on my mat, whether it's five minutes or 60 minutes.

Any favourite yoga teachers or studios?

I used to practice a lot at triyoga and The Power Yoga Co. in London. This was mainly due to the fact that I was teaching there. My favourite teachers are Mona Godfrey, Naomi Absalom, Jean Hall and Tiffany Cruikshank. However, I have recently moved to the countryside so I now rely on my own self-practice in my own farmhouse studio.

How would you describe your own teaching style?

My practice and teaching integrates movement practices and philosophical



“I am now more nourishing, more compassionate, more loving to my own self when I practice. This, in turn, helps me teach with the same compassion to my students...we are all walking each other home.”

teachings. I am often engrossed in non-dualistic, tantric and other modern spiritual texts, and these feed into my own practice and teaching. I focus on leaning into intuition to guide and nourish the body; we look at the journey of the self,

over destination. I often remind students that ‘what we are looking for’ lives within us, that we are made inherently whole, in an imperfectly-perfect body, mind and spirit. I believe that through repetition, love and belief we can keep working towards peace and ultimately an essence of freedom. Not only to cherish what we have, but to see the connected relationship between all.

Yoga career highs so far?

Working all around the world, leading retreats and workshops. Teaching philosophy for a yoga studio in south London, and establishing a large on-demand platform and community called ILY (isabellankesteryoga.com) — this is where I now pour my joy, knowledge and continued learning.

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you started out as a teacher?

That the number of students in your class doesn't matter; it's staying true to your own core beliefs that is the key to how you express yourself genuinely on the mat. That burning out and saying 'yes' to every offer will not feed your teaching in the long-term. It's all about quality over quantity.

Any tips for students new to yoga?

Try to keep your eyes and heart on your own mat. There is nothing more soul destroying than comparison. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses — it's what makes us human. Take your time to digest, find a good teacher that you love, and stick with them. When I first started practicing I used to go to so many teachers, this can muddy your journey. Notice the teachers that make you feel





whole and nourished, that encourage non-ego and a non-dogmatic approach to practice.

What do you say to people who feel they can't do yoga because they're not in shape, too old or inflexible?


That's like saying you're too hungry to eat!

What do you do when you're not doing yoga?

A little design work. I make bespoke furniture for clients around the UK. My background before getting into yoga was interior design and since moving to Shropshire I now work freelance for a handful of designers in London. So I am either teaching, reading, practicing yoga, or sketching out furniture, revitalising our new Georgian home, cuddling Fynn, my

seven-month-old baby, or having a full on family day with my husband and daughter, Isla. We love scurrying around the local salvage yard or taking our red labrador for long dog walks through the fields.

Any tips for incorporating yoga into mundane activities?

Just carve out a small portion of the day to yourself, to be with yourself, your mind, your heart. We often spend a huge proportion of the day looking after others, but we cannot give from an empty cup. Sometimes five minutes, eyes closed, in a comfortable seat, is all you need to feel your breath dilate, your heart beat, to remember you are whole. 

Find out more about Isabel Lankester and practice with her online at: isabellankesteryoga.com



Quick Q&A

Favourite yoga book?

Bringing Yoga to Life by Donna Farhi

Go-to health food or drink?

Water and strawberries

Most inspiring quote?

“What you think, you become” — Buddha

Favourite yoga pose and why?

Savasana. We all need to lie on the ground and be consciously still a little more!

If you could take a class as a student with any teacher from anywhere and from any period of time (now or in the distant past) who would it be with and why?

A class by BKS Iyengar in his younger years, in the 1970s!



Yoga YOUR way

A three-part series on expanding your practice to make it support your body, your life, your needs.

By Esther Marie

PART ONE - BODY

When we start yoga, we are often meticulous at making sure our poses are beautifully correct. We painstakingly place our body into the exact alignment of the photographs in the textbooks. But what happens if your body doesn't quite fit the 'ideal' asana mould?

I'm Esther Marie, a yoga and mindfulness teacher who began her yoga journey six years ago, trying to get her body into these poses...but learnt very quickly that, in doing so, you can create more harm than good.

In this first article of a three-part series, I'll share how I adapted my self-practice, and also my teaching approach, to make classes more accessible and functional and still preserve the foundational philosophy behind yoga asana practice.

But first let's take it back a bit. I remember being in a public class and the teacher spotted me and my advanced range of movement almost immediately. I was less than a year into my practice, so I was practicing without the awareness of my condition (Hypermobility Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, or HEDS). We were in low lunge and the teacher did a hands-on adjustment to take me not only further into the pose but way deeper than I had ever been (or knew I could go) before.



Whilst externally others looked on in admiration, and the teacher was telling everyone I had mastered the pose and it looked beautiful, internally, I was in pain. As I was at the beginning of my yoga journey, I did not have the confidence to question and speak up to the teacher. After the class, I thought to myself that I could use this pain as a warning to never practice asana again, or use it as my driving force to find a different way to practice.

Here are three ways you can adapt your yoga asana practice to make it more your own and enhance the longevity of your practice.

1. Bending the knees

Whether it's a standing posture, forward fold or even chaturanga, taking a bend in the knees can transform your body's ability to practice asana. There seems to be a silent unspoken misconception in the yoga world that bending the knees is a sign your body isn't flexible 'enough' or strong 'enough' to straighten the legs.

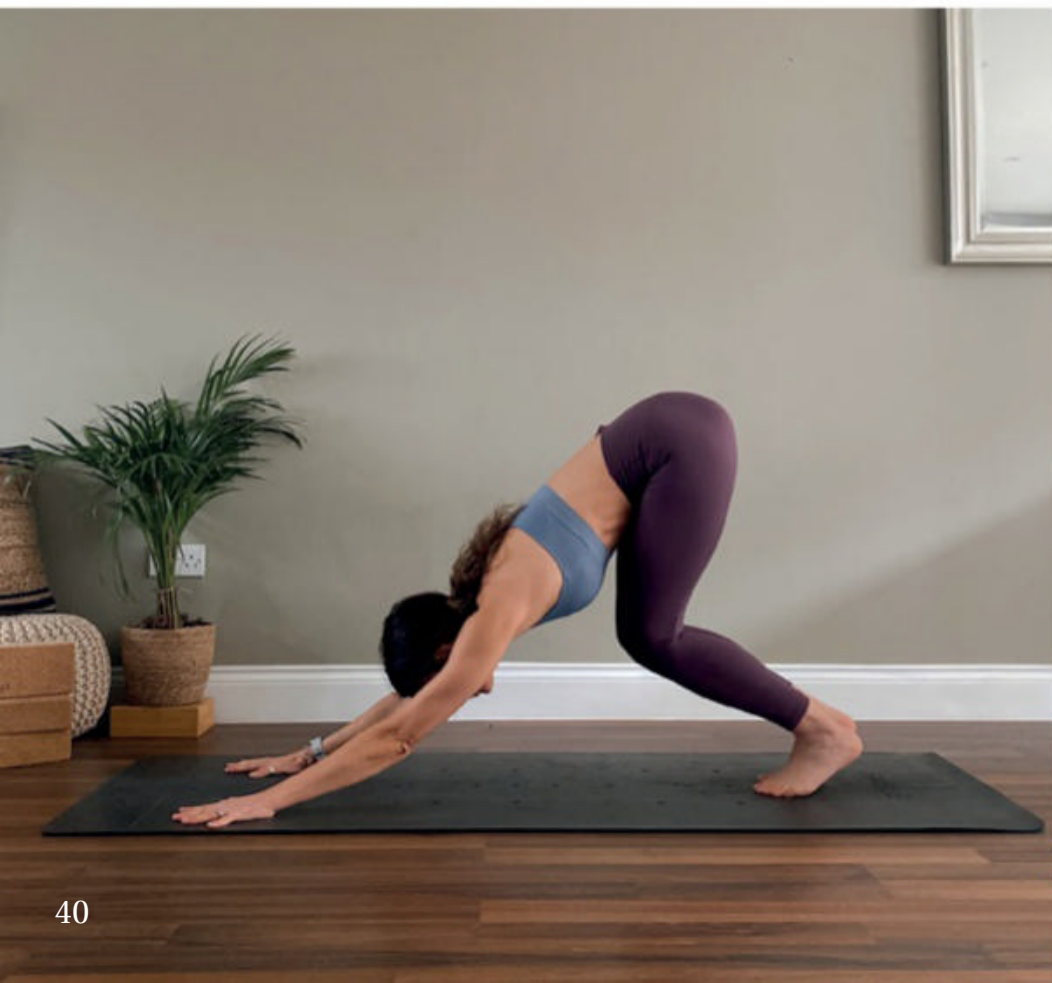
But what bending the knees does, in reality, is offer more stability, alignment of the pelvis, and protection to the joints and muscles. When I see students in my classes bend their knees, take chaturanga with knees down, or even practice high lunge with a bent knee (my personal favourite), I see practitioners in tune with their body and moving intuitively.

Even today, I still frequently teach a vinyasa class where I drop my knees to the mat in chaturanga to provide support for my body and ensure greater mindful awareness and control, which is what we want from our physical practice

2. Time & frequency

I can't remember where I read it, but I remember reading that the 'right' way to practice asana was to do so first thing in the morning, before sunrise, on an empty stomach and for 60-90 minutes.

While this may have been a tradition when yoga first began, misconceptions like this are not only unrealistic, but in some cases the reasons why people believe the practice isn't for them. At the beginning of my own journey, I was eager to practice the 'right' way, so I followed this approach. I would wake at 5am Monday to Friday and practice for 60-70 minutes before I went to work all day. But after nearly a year of practicing like this, not only was I physically exhausted, but emotionally burnt-out to the point of becoming unwell.





I am not opposed to upholding the traditional practices and teachings of yoga, but I do question them and their cost versus benefit. The purpose of asana is to create harmony and balance within, but if the way you're practicing leads you to burnout, you have to reevaluate. Like you, I am juggling fitting in my asana practice around my full-time job (SEMH specialist in education), family life, commitments, as well as running a yoga business and managing fibromyalgia and chronic pain. This means that often my self-practice is just 10 to 20 minutes, rather than 60 minutes.

I'll be honest with you, it took me a while to adjust and accept this way of practicing, mainly because of the all-or-nothing mindset of asana I had learnt. But in adapting my time spent on the mat to meet my lifestyle needs, not only do I have a consistent at-home self-practice, but I very rarely lose motivation for it. I have made it work for me. Just like I have made the postures fit my body's needs, I've made the logistics of my practice suit my reality.

3. Intentional practicing

There comes a point in your self-practice where you will stumble across your 'why'. Why are you rolling out your mat? Why are you practicing today? I was under a year into my practice and came up against my biggest challenge — imposter syndrome. I would attend classes and couldn't help my eyes from glancing here and there and seeing how others were practicing. The catalyst to my pretty serious shoulder injury was a teacher telling me that crow and eight angle poses were the 'easiest' arm balances to do and all beginners can do them. Except me!

This comment became the intention behind every self-practice for months after. I went from not really caring about a crow pose, to practicing it daily for up to two hours. I wasn't aware at this point in my journey that I had hypermobility syndrome and so it is more of a challenge for my body to build strength due to its instability. I thought I was just rubbish! From this experience and the injury I endured (resulting in needing three months of non weight bearing on my upper body) I remember asking myself: what does balancing on my arms mean to me? Why am I so attached to it when it doesn't change my life, nor offer a purpose in my daily life?

I was so attached because I was afraid. I was afraid of appearing not good enough because I couldn't do the 'easy' arm balances despite dedicated practice. Fear was my intention and driving force. Not love and kindness.



Since then, my intention to every self-practice has been ahimsa: non harming and to move with kindness. I always encourage my students to set an intention before a practice and remind them that we don't come to the mat to accomplish a pose or prove ourselves. We come to the mat to lovingly take care of ourselves. ॐ

Find Esther Marie Yoga on Instagram @esthermarieyoga and practice with her on her app and online studio Studio EMY: an online space that merges movement, meditation and mindfulness to help you navigate through daily life.

**Read Part 2 of Esther Marie's 'Yoga Your Way' trilogy coming in the May issue of OM — on sale 20 April, 2023.*





Flower power

Lotus is an iconic yoga pose...but can anyone do it?

By Diane Ashfield

The lotus flower grows all over the world in swamplands and waterways – even the most polluted ones. It begins its life as a seed at the bottom of a muddy and murky pond. When it emerges from the seed and takes root, the small sapling has to make its way up to the surface through all the dirty, gloomy water towards the light where it bursts into the most beautiful flower.

Little wonder that the lotus symbolises beauty and purity, especially as its stunning flower is not affected by all the muck and impurities that surround it.

Our lives can be compared to the journey of the lotus. There are times when we struggle through all the heartache, gloom and drudgery of life to reach the light and something of great beauty. The lotus encourages us to keep going and

push forward, even when the road ahead looks dark and threatening.

Padmasana, or lotus pose, is perhaps the most iconic and instantly recognisable of all yoga poses and is a nod to the lotus flower to remind ourselves that even from humble beginnings, we can still reach great heights. This is the preferred posture to sit in during concentration and meditation practices as it connects us to our seat (the roots), promotes a straight back from the base of the spine to the neck (the stem), and encourages us to find something that is beautiful beyond words (our flower).

Being classified as an advanced asana, to perform Padmasana, we need a considerable amount of hip, knee and ankle flexibility, some of which may take a little time to develop, and an abundance of patience. Some of us may never be able to get into lotus pose because of a lack of

flexibility in the hips.

But whether you are a novice or a regular practitioner of lotus, it's important to warm up the muscles and joints beforehand and not force the limbs into place.

Suggested warm ups for Padmasana might include:

'Rocking the baby' – a lovely gentle hip opener: Sitting comfortably, holding the heel of the left foot with the right hand, left hand on the left knee, lifting the left shin parallel to the floor, roughly chest level, then gently rocking the leg side to side as if rocking a baby to sleep, whilst encouraging the knee towards and beyond the left armpit with every 'rock.' Repeat with the right foot.

Baddha Konasana (cobbler or butterfly pose): again, sitting comfortably, bring

the soles of the feet together, let the knees fall to the sides (have padding or blocks to prop the knees to begin with, or sit on a block or cushion to elevate the hips). We can encourage the feet to be a little closer towards the groin if it feels okay, and then, using our hands, 'open' the feet like a book, keeping the sides of the feet together and gently working the tops of the feet towards the mat so that the soles face upwards and while also working the knees towards the floor and keeping the spine long.

If everything feels okay, we can practice lotus with one foot at a time by beginning in half lotus (Ardha Padmasana) encouraging the top of the foot to sit against the top of the opposite thigh with the sole of the foot facing upwards – again, using padding or blocks for support under the knees, or elevate the hips by sitting on a folded blanket if required. This is actually a good posture to practice on the sofa – with lots of cushions at your disposal – but, as always, work to your measure. Remember that this shouldn't hurt at all and nothing is forced.

It's advised not to attempt full lotus if

you have any knee, ankle or hip issues as this is quite a challenging asana, but remember that we are not all built the same. Even though Padmasana is considered a challenging or even advanced posture, there may be some of you who find it a doddle and can't understand what all the fuss is about! Listen to your body, and if it says "not today thank you" then show your body some respect.

Overall, Padmasana and Ardha Padmasana when practiced regularly can help:

- ◆ Improve posture
- ◆ Increase hip flexibility
- ◆ Stretch the hips, thighs and knees
- ◆ Strengthen and lengthen the spine
- ◆ Improve digestion: the blood flow is directed towards the abdomen which aids digestion and can also help relieve constipation

The late, great BKS Iyengar also mentions Padmasana in 'Light on Yoga':

"Padmasana is one of the most relaxing poses. The body being in a sitting posture, it is at rest without being sloppy. The position of the crossed legs and the erect back keeps the mind attentive and alert. Hence it is one of the asanas recommended for practicing Pranayama (breath control). On the purely physical level, the pose is good for curing stiffness in the knees and ankles. Since the blood is made to circulate in the lumbar region and the abdomen, the spine and the abdominal muscles are toned."

Most of all, whenever practicing Padmasana, always tune in to what your body is saying. Yoga should be an enjoyable and pain-free experience, so take it slow and easy, use gentle encouragement rather than force. The journey towards lotus pose is all part of the process, so with time, tender guidance and patience, your flower will begin to blossom! ॐ

Diane Ashfield (aka Yoga With Dash) is a British Wheel of Yoga teacher with classes online and in-person in Bromley, Kent. Connect with her at @yogawithdashuk

"The journey towards lotus pose is all part of the process, so with time, tender guidance and patience, your flower will begin to blossom."



5

yoga practices to relieve anxiety and overwhelm in menopause

By Ceri Lee

I remember going to the GP in my early forties convinced of an impending heart attack. It was a difficult time in life and my heart had begun to hurt. I was scared. The GP wasn't worried, he diagnosed anxiety and handed over a prescription for betablockers.

In taking the prescription home, at that moment came the decision to focus more deeply on pranayama (yogic breathing practices) and meditation to help relieve my heart instead of taking the medication. I had been teaching yoga for over 10 years and knew what to do. After a week of daily practice, the heart stopped hurting and it felt possible to face life again.

Then, after a hysterectomy aged 49, the same symptoms returned overnight following surgery. This time I knew what to do and applied the same breathing techniques to relieve the pressure and pain in the chest.

Menopause signifies the end of a woman's fertile years with diminishing sex hormones. Peri menopause is when the hormones begin to fluctuate and some of the main physical symptoms begin to show, including irregular periods, hot flushes, and night sweats.

Common non-physical symptoms include:

- ◆ Anger & irritability
- ◆ Mental fatigue
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Low mood/depression

Anxiety & overwhelm

Anxiety is a heightened state of nervousness in response from the nervous system affecting our heartbeat and how we breathe. A study of 3,000 women aged between 40-55 showed that 50% had symptoms of anxiety,



Abdominal breath

tension, irritability, and irrational fear.

Fluctuations in the hormones oestrogen and progesterone, and sleep disturbances during menopause can cause anxiety. Life changes like children leaving home, work commitments, and the impact of modern life on midlife women can also bring on anxiety due to stress.

Gen X women are the first generation dealing with the stress of modern living, including having a family as well as a full-time career, along with the temptation of fast food or a processed diet and excess alcohol.

How can yoga help manage anxiety?

When anxious, your body goes into fight-or-flight mode, a biological response that produces the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol, causing shallow breathing and a faster heartbeat as well as other symptoms. It is a survival instinct developed by our ancient ancestors in response to threats such as wild animals. Our amygdala, the oldest part of the brain, responds to perceived danger and sends signals to the

“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.”
Amit Ray



Anuloma Viloma

sympathetic nervous system.

When anxious, the brain sends the same message to the body to act accordingly in a perceived threatening situation. The strong feelings that anxiety evokes stop your thinking because the brain is focused on preparing the body to fight or run from the apparent danger.

Yoga asana (posture) and pranayama (yogic breathwork) give you head space and bring you back to a rational state. The following asana and breathing techniques activate the relaxation response and are powerful tools to relieve anxiety and stress in the mind.



Trikonasana

exhaling through the alternate nostril.

- Practice in sukhasana, a cross-legged sitting posture with hands on your knees, or sit in a chair with feet on the floor and hands on the thighs.
- Gently bring the left thumb and forefinger together in jnana mudra, and tuck the right fore and middle finger into the palm of your right hand in vishnu mudra,
- Close your eyes and take several slow breaths.
- Close the right nostril with the right thumb and inhale through the left nostril for three counts.
- Close both nostrils and hold the breath for up to 12 counts.

5 yoga practices to relieve anxiety & overwhelm in menopause

1. Abdominal breath

Dropping the breath down to the belly is grounding and encourages the relaxation response. The slow, even breath relaxes taut muscles whilst increasing blood supply and nutrients to the muscles.

Here's how you do it

- Sit in sukhasana (cross legged) or on a chair with your feet placed firmly on the ground, placing your hands on your thighs.
- Breathe in through the nose and breathe out with a soft sigh. Repeat four times.
- Now place your hands on your belly and breathe slowly in and out through the nose.
- Bring your attention to your belly and slowly draw the breath down, relaxing the abdomen so it expands.
- When you breathe out, encourage the abdomen to contract back into the body.
- Repeat for a minute or until you feel settled.

2. Alternate Nostril Breathing: Anuloma Viloma

This practice rebalances energy and provides optimum function to the brain by creating equilibrium between creativity and logic. Blood receives a larger amount of oxygen and soothes the entire nervous system, so the mind feels calm and relaxed. It increases vitality, clarity and lowers stress levels. The technique requires breathing in through one nostril, retaining the breath and

(Begin with three and increase counts when comfortable).

- Open the right nostril with the thumb and exhale through the right nostril for six counts.
- Inhale through the right nostril for three counts.
- Close both nostrils and hold the breath for up to 12 counts.
- Open the left nostril with the ring finger and exhale through the left nostril for six counts.
- Repeat five times.

3. Triangle: Trikonasana (Sivananda Style)

This side-line posture strengthens the spinal nerves, activating the whole functioning of the nervous system to relieve anxiety and depression. Because of its unique rebalancing of the parasympathetic nervous system (de-stress triggers), it is beneficial to practice in the evening before bed. It tones and massages the pelvic organs, removes stiffness in the hips, legs, back and shoulders, aids digestion, tones the waistline, strengthens ankles and develops the chest.

- On your mat, step into five-pointed star, and adjust the right foot 90°.
- Inhale the left arm up to the sky and exhale over to the right, letting the right hand drop down to touch the right leg.
- Aim to bring the left arm parallel with the mat.
- Remain here for five slow breaths.
- Inhale up and repeat on other side.

4. Supported Child: Salamba Balasana


Balasana opens the hips, relieves tension in the pelvis and lengthens the spine. It also encourages deeper breathing and gently increases blood supply to the head and neck. Supported child uses cushions, bolster and/or blankets for deeper release.



Viparita Karani

5. Legs Up The Wall: Viparita Karani

Not only is this asana effective in relieving anxiety by regulating blood flow, but it also relieves swollen ankles, improves digestion, restores tired feet and ankles, relieves headaches, and helps boost vitality and youthfulness.

- Bring mat to the wall, with a blanket, folded in half at the top end of the mat.
- Place your bottom close to the wall, placing a folded blanket or cushion if there is discomfort.
- Lay your head on the blanket at the top end of the mat.
- In foetal position with the feet on the wall, walk the feet up the wall so the legs begin to straighten upwards.
- Place an eye cushion over the eyes and draw the blanket around the head and shoulders.
- Take a few moments to rest here. 

Other ways to relieve anxiety

- Exercise
- Gut-friendly diet
- Reduce caffeine & alcohol
- Good sleep routine
- Massage, reiki, and acupuncture
- Join a support group

Ceri Lee is a yoga teacher of over 20 years and the founder of Yoga Light (yoga-light.com). Connect on instagram @ceriyogalight



Salamba Balasana



Ageing gratefully

Learning how to age gracefully...and gratefully. How yoga can help with changes in a woman's body, mind, and heart in the wisdom years. **By Desi Bartlett**

Our relationship with ageing is often adversarial — ageing is seen as something that we must 'fight' or 'combat'.

In 2021, the anti-ageing industry generated \$60 billion worldwide, and that's predicted to double by 2030. Many of the creams, serums, and procedures that are marketed, focus on women.

The wording on these advertising for these products can send a subtle message that ageing is connected to fear and shame. We are often told that we need to pull, tuck, and smooth our skin and bodies.

But what if we could reframe this point of view, and remember that we are indeed beautiful because we have reached a certain age, filled with wisdom and a lifetime of experiences? What if gratitude and celebration could become the new buzz words associated with ageing?

This time of life can be associated with coming into our full power, our full ability to use our voices and become our own best advocate.

Advocating for health — and not only for anti-wrinkle creams — is a proactive step in ageing gratefully. Treating the body, mind, and heart with respect and care can not only improve our health, it can also create a paradigm shift for women around the world.

Looking at women's health through the lens of feeling good, and not just looking a certain way, requires a consideration of the changes that happen in our bodies after the age of 40. It is usually around this age that we enter perimenopause, which is the transition into menopause. Perimenopause can last up to eight years, and is associated with declining levels of oestrogen, as well as several other changes in a woman's endocrine system.

To help mitigate some of the effects

of the declining levels in oestrogen, some women are prescribed hormonal replacement therapy (HRT).

It is important to note that women's health is not 'one size fits all', and not all women can tolerate the side effects of HRT, which for some, can be worse than the symptoms associated with the menopausal transition.

While symptoms can vary from woman to woman, three of the most common complaints during this stage of life include: hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and weight gain. This particular trio of symptoms is often a cascade effect in that a woman might have a hot flush in her sleep, which awakens her from rest. Once a woman is awake, there is then a disruption in her sleep pattern, and it is often challenging to go back to sleep. With this disturbance in sleep comes a disruption in her normal eating schedule, and often a craving for sugar to help her

feel a bit of energy after disrupted sleep, which can make her feel fatigued.

What can help? Research has shown that yoga can help mitigate many of the symptoms associated with perimenopause. A 2021 study found that a regular yoga practice can help women improve their quality of life through the menopausal transition.

Additional studies have shown that yoga can also help to improve one's quality of sleep, as well as helping to regulate weight and help prevent obesity.

Yoga is indeed an amazing tool for women during the menopausal transition in terms of physical health, but what about mental and emotional health?

Scientific research has also shown that yoga can help with these issues as well. Many women share that there can be an intensification of moods during this phase of life (mood swings), and women who have never experienced anxiety or depression might encounter this for the first time during this transition.

Yoga can help to ease intense emotions and anxiety, and there are many tools from the practice that one can employ.

Here are some of the tools that can help with physical, mental, and emotional changes:

PHYSICAL TOOLS

- Enjoy a regular yoga practice at least two times per week for 60 minutes.
- Practice ujjayi pranayama (diaphragmatic breathing) when there are feelings of anxiety or overwhelm.
- Participate in weight-bearing activity, including yoga, and resistance training to improve bone density.

- Ask your physician for a full blood panel analysis to understand hormonal levels, as well as micronutrient levels.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Meditate each morning for at least five minutes (think of it like brushing your teeth...or mental hygiene).
- Notice if you experience repetitive thoughts that do not serve, and, if there are, use a 'pattern interrupt', such as dancing.
- Try a 30-day 'fast' from complaining.

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

- Make a gratitude list.
- Maintain a healthy eating schedule with nutritious foods.
- Combine a colourful carbohydrate with satiating protein for a mood boost (e.g. butternut squash soup with pumpkin seeds).
- Set clear boundaries with your time.

The ancient yogis taught us that the health of the spine is directly related to the age that one feels. Modern science teaches that there is a direct correlation between gratitude and happiness. It is important to remember that mental, emotional, and physical health are not one size fits all, and finding the perfect combination requires some inquiry. Simple questions such as: 'How does my body feel today?', and 'What am I grateful for?' can give clear feedback on what to let go of, and what to invite in more of. 🌀

For more tips, check out the new book, 'Total Body Beautiful: Secrets to Looking and Feeling Your Best After Age 35' by Desi Bartlett, Andrea Orbeck, and Nicole Stuart. Out now!



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Finding balance through yoga

Balance is key to a stable life and yoga can be a key means to finding it across all age groups. **By Fenella Lindsell**



More than standing on one leg

Good balance is key to a functioning body. It helps prevent injuries, links to efficient muscular control, improves posture, reduces our chances of arthritis, back pain and other health issues.

On a social level, poor balance affects people differently. In the elderly, it can limit the activities they feel confident doing. This can lead to increased isolation and a reduction in physical health if they are forced to withdraw from a more active lifestyle.

For younger and middle aged people, balance is important for exercise and also some types of work. Poor balance means people can miss out on healthy parts of life, such as sports engagement and other activities which increase our physical wellbeing, as well as involvement in communities and regulating important parts of our brain's health.

The science

We have very upright bodies with a heavy head at the top if it — so there is a good deal of effort required to stabilise our wobbly wanderings.

Balance is made up of a sensory system and, as with any sensory system, stimuli is gathered from outside the brain and then processed internally, sending information to the body and carrying out important functions. For sight, this information is light from outside that we process and make into conceivable images. For balance, the information is motion based and relies on a complex structure in our inner ear.

We have five balance receptors in the inner ear that deal with different types of movement. Three are for head movement, one is for upward acceleration and the final one is for lateral acceleration, like sideways movement.

These balance receptors are tubes filled with fluid. Inside the tubes are a series of hair cells (endolymph) that respond to movements in the fluid. As we move, the inner ear fluid moves and the hair cells inside get stimulated by the movement. Together, they form a picture of our balance, working in symphony, stimulating and relaxing as the liquid is moved. These balance receptors also influence the response of our eye muscles to enable stable vision and keep us upright.

The body and balance

There are some parts of the body that are more important than others when it comes to balance. Unlike other forms of exercise, yoga targets an inclusive range of muscle groups all over the body and, as a result, has significant impact on regions that can improve our balance. Three regions are particularly important:

Core: Made of 28 muscles, this region helps to stabilise our hips, shoulders and spine.

Legs and glutes: When these are strong, they enable us to walk on uneven terrain, steep gradients and allow us to stand and sit easily among other things.

Feet and toes: Our big toe, little toe and heel create a tripod with the ability to shift weight across these three points in response to where the rest of the body is positioned. A study by Choue et al. focused on the big toe in balance and found that when the big toe was constrained or unable to properly function, subjects were significantly worse at balancing. It is estimated that as much as 80-90% of foot control comes from the big toe.

Yoga and balance

Yoga is essential for improving muscular strength and flexibility across the entire body. With most poses in yoga the core is

activated and tested. Over time, this means the core is strengthened. Muscles that help keep our posture aligned are important for maintaining good balance and good body position during movement.

Elderly people

Some studies have shown that yoga provides benefits to balance and in particular, improves physical mobility in people aged 60 years and older. Another study in 2019 by Green et al. found that the benefits of yoga include improved posture control, improved flexibility of mind and body, relaxation, and decreased anxiety and stress.

Also in 2019, a study by Patel et al. concluded that yoga asanas (the physical postures we assume during hatha yoga practice) are effective in improving balance in elderly individuals in both the short and medium term.

Neurodiverse groups

Balance is also closely related with ADHD. This has been linked to issues with the cerebellum in the brain. The cerebellum is a region that controls motor activities and is often affected in those with ADHD, impacting motor functioning and therefore, balancing issues.

This means children with ADHD are more

likely to experience postural sway which is a term used to describe the unconscious, small movements that happen around the body's centre of gravity in order to maintain balance. Up to 50% of children with ADHD experience poor balance from postural sway. One of the benefits of yoga is its ability to improve concentration (Sheela Joyce, 2018) which helps with our conscious balance. Also, yoga strengthens muscles that are important in the balancing process, such as core, glutes, legs and back.

What does our healthcare deal with in balance costs

Most of us know someone who has taken a fall at home that ended up being a serious injury. This is often the case for elderly relatives or friends. Staggeringly, the NHS spends approximately £435 million per year dealing with falls that have happened at home.


Unsurprisingly, a common result of these falls is damage to the hip. Costs from hip fractures in the NHS amount to an even greater total of £2 billion per year; this is half of the total NHS spending on fracture injuries.

Falls are often linked to issues with balance and can be alleviated by yoga, as mentioned previously. In groups of people who are in later age, the impact

of something like a hip fracture is often the beginning of ongoing difficulties with physical strength and mobility. It is a well-known case that hip damage takes people further from an active lifestyle and, in older people, this can also mean increased isolation on a social level as well.

Studies have found that yoga can significantly improve balance control in populations of those aged 60-plus, and also improves balance and reduces back pain in people with Parkinsons disease (Myers et al. 2020).

The big picture

Balance is key to a stable life. When people have poor balance, our sense of movement and physicality is deeply affected and this can play out in ways that make people feel isolated in both young and elderly groups. It is clear that yoga can play a key role in improving balance by increasing focus, concentration and strengthening the muscle groups that help us to stay steady. Yoga is key to balance, and as they say — balance is the key to a healthy life. 

Fenella Lindsell is a long-established yoga instructor and the founder of Yoga Forever (yoga-forever.com)

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nell@yoga-forever.com
www.yoga-forever.com

Take me out

Prefer to practice at home?
Here are five reasons to take your
mat out and visit your local
yoga studio this month



There are lots of reasons why we convince ourselves not to go to a yoga class: “It’s too cold” or “My hamstrings are tight” or “Sarah’s not going to be there tonight.”

Maybe you’ve always practiced at home and have never had the experience of a ‘live’ class before because fear or lack of confidence is holding you back.

Whatever your motives are for staying put, there’s at least one good reason to venture out of your front door and come to a yoga class.

1. Expertise

To begin with, you will be in expert hands. Yoga teachers not only have a wealth of personal and teaching experience, but most have spent the better part of three years in professional training and then continue to develop their skills by attending seminars and workshops, exploring ways to bring a better and more fulfilling style of yoga just for you. Your teacher may approach a certain pose in a way you’d never thought of before, or introduce you to a posture you didn’t know existed, which – who knows - might become your new favourite!

2. Alignment

When we practice at home, we can’t see the position of our bodies



unless we practice in front of a full-length mirror. We might think we are doing it right when in fact we are way off course, which could lead to over-stretching or even injury. We might also notice that a certain posture just doesn't feel right but have no idea how to correct ourselves. A teacher would be able to adjust and correct your alignment (with your permission, of course!) and then check with you how it feels. Your teacher could also introduce props such as blankets or blocks, or encourage you to work towards the wall to help you progress.

3. Distractions

When we practice at home there are too many distractions – the phone, the doorbell, even the dog – and far too often as soon as you roll out your mat, members of the household suddenly appear demanding you to find their missing homework, socks or dinner! Coming to class gives you the opportunity to leave



everything behind and just concentrate on your mind, body and spirit – stretching the muscles as well as rejuvenating and refreshing your inner being.

4. Motivation

Sometimes when we practice at home, our motivation flies out of the window! You may set yourself a target of five breaths to hold a pose, but then you decide that three is enough...okay, maybe two. Well, there's no-one there to encourage you, or to tell you how great you are doing. For me, relaxation at the end of the class is something to look forward to, helping us to unwind and reset by being breath aware and focusing on relaxing the whole body. Chances are that if you practice at home you would skip this altogether. Having a soothing voice encouraging you to release and let go is one of most beneficial aspects of a yoga class, and something you definitely would not want to miss out on if you've had a busy day, your body feels tense, or your mind feels frazzled.

5. Social interaction

When you come to class you will meet like-minded people who want to tone their bodies and de-stress their minds. Great friendships have been formed in yoga classes...and I know of at least one marriage which resulted from two students first meeting on the mat. Just saying!

So what if it's cold outside and Sarah's not going to be there tonight? Set your TV to record your favourite show and take your mat out on a date night. You both deserve it, and you never know: it could turn into something quite beautiful! ॐ

Diane Ashfield (aka Yoga With Dash) is a British Wheel of Yoga teacher with classes online and in-person in Bromley, Kent. Connect with her at @yogawithdashuk

Yoga Retreats 2023

Welcome to our guide to some of the best yoga breaks on offer this year. If you've been on a yoga retreat before then you probably already know that delicious feeling of space and relaxed ease you get stretching out on the mat by day, then chilling by night.

If not, then you're in for a treat! Why go on a yoga retreat? There are so many reasons! As well as enjoying and deepening your asana practice, spending time in the company of friends, likeminded people and your teacher, you'll feel great reconnecting with nature, cleansing and detoxing the body and soothing the mind. By the end of the retreat you'll feel like you're walking on air.

Yoga retreats are all different, though, so read on for more inspiration and ideas on where to book your amazing holiday this year.



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Suryalila Retreat Centre, Andalusia, Spain

This stunningly beautiful retreat centre, in the heart of Andalusia, Spain, is perfect for a relaxing, nourishing, warm and friendly escape. Join one of the many retreats and holidays, or visit as an independent guest and enjoy world-class yoga, organic vegetarian buffets, saltwater pool and massages, set in magical surroundings with epic views.

You'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to the yoga. Suryalila is home to the magnificent Om Dome plus two additional indoor yoga shalas, as well as a boutique, cafe, and meditation garden. Signature retreats include: 'Hiking and Yoga', 'Adventure and Yoga', 'Yoga, Nature and White Villages', 'Spring Happiness Boosting', 'Winter Wellness', 'Summer Sanctuary' and 'Relax and Restore'. You'll also find three-week 200hr teacher training intensives and advanced modules with Frog Lotus Yoga, led by the centre's director and senior yoga instructor, Vidya Heisel.

The centre is ideally located, close to lots of cultural attractions, such as the beautiful cities of Seville, Ronda, and Jerez, as well as breathtaking natural parks, mountains, wild rivers, and lakes. Suryalila is also home to the flagship Danyadara project, a non-profit permaculture initiative aimed at regenerating and reforestation of the surrounding land.



Suitable for: Suryalila offers many, varied yoga styles with world class Instructors, suitable for beginners to advanced practitioners of all ages.

When: Open all year round, hosting ongoing yoga retreats, holidays, teacher trainings and independent yoga hotel stays.

Accommodation: Various types of accommodation to suit all budgets, from deluxe double rooms with ensuite bathrooms to yurts and glamping tents.

How much: Accommodation with full board (three delicious organic vegetarian buffets per day) plus yoga classes from €75 per night.



Find out more: suryalila.com

Get social:

@suryalilayoga

Suryalila Retreat Centre



Year-round Yoga Holidays, Retreats & Trainings

Suryalila Retreat Centre is your sanctuary for inner and outer wellbeing in the heart of Andalusia. It offers a wonderfully warm environment and is surrounded by stunning scenery.

Be nourished by world-class yoga, renowned and sumptuous organic vegetarian buffets, saltwater pool, eco sauna, divine massage treatments and fabulous yoga shalas.

Join a holiday or retreat led by internationally recognised teachers, or train to become a yoga teacher.



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 - ✦ Adventure and Yoga Retreat
 - ✦ Happiness Boosting Retreat
 - ✦ White Villages and Yoga
 - ✦ Yoga Teacher Trainings
- And much more...

w: suryalila.com
e: info@suryalila.com
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is incredible, our retreat was
brilliant from start to finish'
Bethan King 2022

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retreats for more than
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Find out why people
keep coming back

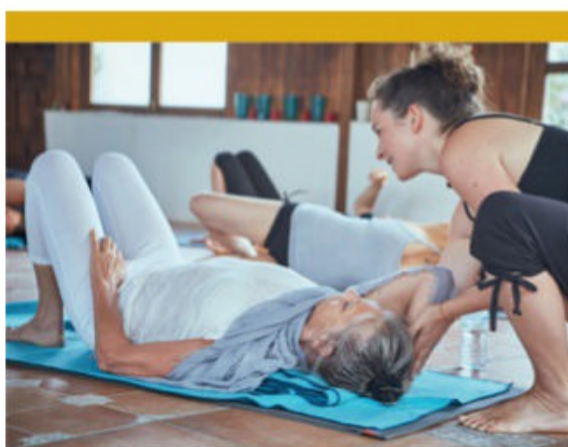
huzvad@gmail.com
www.huzurvadisi.com

Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Huzur Vadisi Yoga Retreats — Turkey, Spain, Wales, Norway and Iceland



Enjoy the pleasures of a restorative yoga retreat in beautiful surroundings, with great teaching, good company, friendly experienced staff and great food. Huzur Vadisi has been facilitating yoga retreats for over 30 years. Its experience enables you to simply relax and focus on your yoga while they take care of you. The company is also renowned for its delicious veggie food (the Huzur Vadisi Cookbook is available from Amazon if you'd like to know more). New for 2023: two additional beautiful Huzur Vadisi retreat venues have been added in Turkey and in Norway!



Suitable for: Everyone! You'll find a retreat that offers a yoga practice that suits you. See website retreat page for details. Enquiries welcome from yoga teachers looking for a venue too.


When: Retreats are all year round in Wales, Iceland and Norway. May to October in Turkey and Spain.

Accommodation: A choice of venue and accommodation to suit all tastes and pockets, from elegant ensuite rooms to charming rustic yurts.

How much: Prices from around £675 for 7 nights, varying with each venue and teacher. Includes accommodation, all meals and yoga sessions.

Find out more: huzurvadisi.com

Get social:

 @huzurvadisiyogaretreats

 [huzurvadisi.yoga.retreats](https://www.facebook.com/huzurvadisi.yoga.retreats)

Angel Yoga Surrey —UK, Spain, India

The hosts together have over 35 years experience running retreats in Spain, UK and India. Manorama Devi Desi is the director of Yoga Alliance International Spain, and has trained in leading institutes across India. Manorama and her partner Claire Laho offer yoga retreats and teacher trainings in their traditional authentic form, right from the heart of spiritual India, honouring this ancient practice as the great gurus and sages before them have. Retreats and trainings are kept small and tailored to each and every student. With natural salt water pools, homegrown foods, nature walks and yoga to suit all levels you'll feel revived and restored. Whether you join a retreat in Spain nestled in the Spanish Mountains overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, the UK close to nature or want to explore further a field to the yoga home of India, you will leave with a deep sense of purpose, love and respect for yourself and the healing practice of yoga and all it offers.



Suitable for: Suitable for all.

When: Retreats run throughout the year. Next date is 14-28 May in Spain for a one-of-a-kind retreat with highly-acclaimed yoga teacher, Manorama Devi Dasi, who is the director of Yoga Alliance International, Spain.

Accommodation: Shared or single room options available. All venues surrounded by nature, serving homegrown or locally-sourced vegetarian food.

How much: From €1,595pp for 7 nights in a twin room. All meals included.

Find out more:
angelyogasurrey.co.uk youareyoga.com

Get social:
 @angelyoga5555
 angelyoga @spiritofyoga



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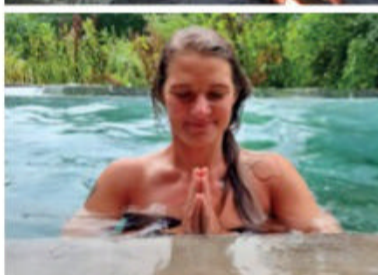
www.angelyogasurrey.co.uk | youareyoga.com

Golden Grove Retreat — Carmarthenshire, Wales

A haven of tranquillity and relaxation, nestled on 10 acres of wild land adjacent to an organic farm. Guests enjoy picturesque views, spacious rooms with underfloor heating keeping you warm and cosy, while the lounges, patios and fire pit area provide ample opportunities for relaxation and entertainment.


Offering in-house and hosted events, there are an unrivalled range of retreats to join, with spa facilities and nourishing menus to soothe, relax and reward your body, mind and soul - as part of a rounded experience.

Golden Grove Retreat includes a fully equipped infra-red heated yoga studio for your daily practices, an aroma-fused wood-fired sauna perfect for relaxation and detoxing and ice-cold plunge pool for stimulation, healing, breath work and rejuvenation. The outdoor hot tub offers a tranquil environment to enjoy nature and unwind. Located close to beautiful beaches, castles, and walks, as well as the fresh and organic produce on offer from the nearby farm, Golden Grove Retreat is the perfect choice to discover your body's seven main energy centres and unlock the power of your chakras.



Find out more: goldengroveretreat.co.uk

Get social:

 @golden_grove_retreat

 Golden Grove Retreat

Suitable for: Something for everyone. Alongside core strength vinyasa, restorative, and aerial yoga, Golden Grove Retreat offers a five-day Master Detox Programme for those wanting to boost health and immunity, increase energy, improve sleep and other benefits. Facilitating external hosts also embraces peoples' differences and offers wide-ranging retreat styles and themes. Teacher training and private hire also available.

When: A range of day retreats and one- to five-night retreats held weekly, plus visiting hosts throughout the year. Browse online for the full range of retreats, hosts and themes.

Accommodation: With a subtle African theme, the main house offers warm and homely accommodation for 12 in four large bedrooms, all with en-suite bathrooms. The two secluded safari lodges provide additional accommodation for up to 12 guests in natural surroundings, giving a sense of grounding in nature. Guests can often see deer moving through the fields. Amenities include complimentary wifi, a fully-equipped kitchen and cosy fireplaces. The lodges include gas-fired showers and compost toilets.

How much: Workshops from £35, day retreats from £95, two-day retreats from £350, three-day retreats from £475 and five-day retreats from £625. All-inclusive unless specified. Different hosts offer different programmes and charge different prices.

Golden Grove Retreat

A beautiful retreat centre in South Wales offering a wide variety of weekly retreats at great prices. Contact us today to find the perfect retreat for you!



I recently held my very first retreat at the Golden Grove and it was honestly wonderful. Everything was perfect, from the location to the comfort of the beds. It felt like home. The house and yoga studio are beautiful and the sauna combined with the plunge pool with the sun beaming felt like we were on holiday. The guests were so impressed and couldn't wait to re-book. I can't wait to run my next retreat here.

Lauren



Find out more: goldengroveretreat.co.uk
Get social: @golden_grove_retreat Golden Grove Retreat

www.goldengroveretreat.co.uk



Escape to a paradise of hiking, yoga, and homemade Greek cuisine.



Our week-long retreat will soothe your soul, nourish your body, and awaken your senses. Join us now!



Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Nefeli Nine Retreats — Greece

Join Nefeli Nine this year and experience the magnificent beauty of Greece for a week focused on wellness, nature and culture. Enjoy hikes with panoramic views, visits to historical sites, balancing yoga classes and delicious local cuisine, exploring Greece at its best...without the crowds!



Suitable for: Everyone welcome. No level of yoga is required, just a general level of fitness and curiosity to explore!


When: 17-23 September 2023; 1-7 October 2023; 14-21 October (Pelion)

Accommodation: In a gorgeous villa overlooking the Aegean Sea. There are two room options: deluxe with an en-suite bathroom, or a standard (equally beautiful) room that shares a bathroom with one other guest.

How much: Standard bedroom, shared bathroom, solo occupancy €1,980. Deluxe bedroom en-suite bathroom, solo occupancy €2,475. Shared occupancy €1,850pp.

Find out more: nefelinine.com

Get social:

 [@nefelinineretreats](https://www.instagram.com/nefelinineretreats)

 [NefeliNineRetreats](https://www.facebook.com/NefeliNineRetreats)

Email: steph@nefelinine.com

Website: www.nefelinine.com

IG: [@nefelinineretreats](https://www.instagram.com/nefelinineretreats)

Yahra Yoga Retreat — Cornwall



Do you feel a pull to connect back to nature? Join yahra for a three-night earth-embracing immersion in Cornwall this summer. Retreating to 300 acres of ancient temperate rainforest, rolling hills and wildflower meadows filled with animals and species, you will fall back in love with the simple things that nature presents. With a combined 30 years of experience in the wellbeing industry, your teachers (Emily Sailes and Kim Fletcher) bring their passion of creating safe and sacred spaces for your own personal journey to unfold. Yoga classes include a variety of heart-opening vinyasa flows, restorative yoga, and evening yin to ground and unwind for a peaceful slumber. Allow your mind to open to a higher being with a guided cacao ceremony, then lie back and bliss out to the healing sounds of gong therapy. Spend your free time exploring the land, wild swimming, or rejuvenate in the woodland sauna. In the evenings, gather around the fire pit, roast marshmallows and gaze up at the stars in one of the UK's only dark sky environments.

Suitable for: Anyone wanting to step away from the busy-ness of day-to-day life and reconnect with nature, embracing the wilderness and unique energy of the surroundings. Beginners and intermediate welcome.

When: Thursday 8 June - Sunday 11 June, 2023

Accommodation: Sleep soundly under the stars at Cabilla, in luxury Koyt cabins, with large triangle windows, bringing nature to you. Each Koyt offers a private plot with outside seating and outdoor fire pit, throws, luxury toiletries and hot water bottles, bringing warmth and contentment for the perfect night's rest.

How much: Shared accommodation (with Egyptian cotton bed linen) £745. Private accommodation (with king-sized bed, Egyptian cotton bed linen) £845. Both prices include accommodation, meals, yoga classes, cacao sound ceremony, guided walks, facilities and goody bag.

Find out more: yahra.co.uk

Get social:

@yahra.uk

yahra



cornwall yoga retreat

8th - 11th June 2023

yahra.co.uk



Super Love Yoga Retreats — Ibiza, Mykonos, UK



Super Love Yoga is about creating the freedom and joy to be you through movement and community. Gather with likeminded souls, nourish yourself through connecting with other women, nature, the practice and most importantly yourself. Build the foundations of unshakeable self-confidence, fully embrace the raw, perfectly imperfect you, and let go of all the limiting beliefs that hold you back from living a life you love. All retreats include Vinyasa, Yin, meditation, sound healing, life coaching and a private chef. There will also be a masseuse, empowerment coach and Kinesiologist available to help you reach your individual relaxation and wellness goals. Whether your journey takes you to Mykonos, Ibiza or the UK, you'll leave feeling cherished, loved and rejuvenated.



Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report



Suitable for: All retreats are suitable for beginner and intermediate yogis and anyone looking to relax and getaway.

When: Various dates across the year. Scan the QR code or visit the website for more details.

Accommodation: All retreats are hosted at luxury villas with king or single bed configurations. Rooms can be single, double or triple occupancy, depending on the venue.

How much: Mykonos Luxury Retreat starting at £1,600pp. Ibiza Island Bliss starting at £2,100pp. UK Weekend Getaway starting at £700pp.



Find out more:
superloveyoga.com/yoga-retreats
Get social:
@thesuperlovecoach
@savethymecooking @namastace_yoga



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[WWW.SUPERLOVEYOGA.COM](https://www.superloveyoga.com)

Luxury Yoga Retreats Ibiza | Mykonos | UK

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"Thanks for an amazing week, I can still feel the power from the connections we made together as a group of women. All in all, a pretty life changing experience! I can't wait to do it again"



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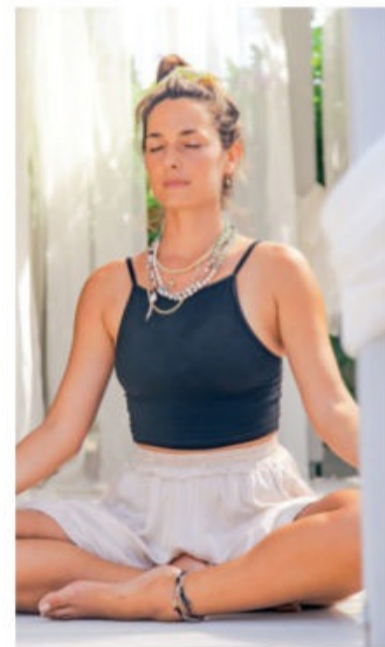
greekparadise

Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Inea Yoga Retreats — Corfu, Greece



Inea Yoga is a yoga school on the magical Island of Corfu in Greece, dedicated to providing a place for people to connect deeply with themselves, and with like-minded people from all over the world. Expect daily morning vinyasa and relaxing evening yin. The centre also offers meditation, yoga workshops, sound baths and mantra chanting circles and massages. A great place to take a break from the distractions of everyday life and focus on your wellbeing; once you're there, just be yourself without any obligations. Enjoy a peaceful, secluded environment, close to nature and the beach. Join group activities such as hiking in the mountains or a boat trip to swim in the crystal clear Ionian Sea. The spirit here is to take things at your own pace, so if you're looking for somewhere to relax, strengthen the body and connect spiritually, then you are at the right place.

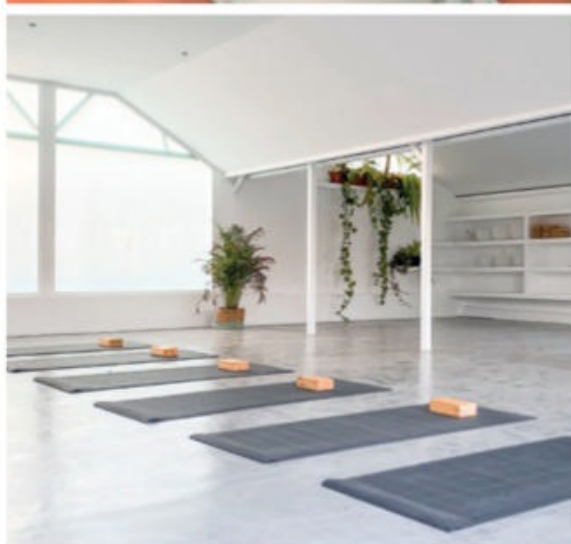


Suitable for: All levels, regardless of age or fitness level. Yoga that nourishes with softness and kindness, inner connection and joy, plus a deep dive with special workshops. Also great for nature lovers and beach holidays.

When: Retreats from April to October.

Accommodation: Inea Yoga has its own venue with 15 rooms, just a minute's walk from the beach. Single and twin room options all with private en suite bathroom.

How much: Six nights / seven days starting from €890. Premium single room option is approx. €1200. Includes morning meditation, 2 x yoga classes, workshops, breakfast & dinner. Additionally, Inea Yoga offers a sound bath, mantra circle and group activities, like hiking and boat trips.



Find out more:

ineayoga.com/yoga-retreats

Get social:

@inea.yoga

Jessica May Retreats — South of France

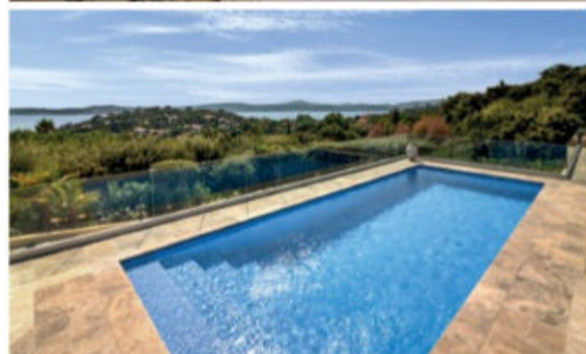
A unique opportunity to escape the demands of daily life and focus on your wellbeing in the stunning location of Sainte Maxime, in the south of France. With panoramic views of the Bay of St.Tropez, this retreat provides the perfect backdrop for relaxation and rejuvenation. Daily yoga, Pilates, meditation and hikes designed to help guests reconnect with mind, body, and spirit, all led by expert instructors. Enjoy delicious, healthy meals, workshops, plus optional beauty therapy and reiki treatments.

Suitable for: Suitable for individuals of all skill levels in yoga, meditation and Pilates.

When: 2023 dates: 18-21 May; 28 September - 1 October (Dates for 2024 retreats to be released later this year)

Accommodation: En-suite, super-king bedrooms each with their unique features. Wake up to breathtaking sea views in Room 1, with double aspect doors. Soak in the sea view and bath in Room 2. Enjoy a private large enclosed patio in Room 3. Find peace and tranquility in the secluded, quiet Rooms 4 and 5 with shared terrace.

How much: From £1100 for double occupancy; £1900 for single occupancy. Includes accommodation for three nights and daily breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Daily classes and workshops.



Find out more:
jessicamaycoaching.com/retreats
Get social:
@jessicamaywellness_



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&
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Soul's Escapes — Worldwide

Soul's Escapes offers luxury bespoke retreats for mind, body and soul in stunning locations worldwide. Expect small, intimate, exclusive experiences. Group size is kept small to provide the best service to guests and ensure all have an unforgettable time. And if you'd rather get undivided attention, private tailor-made programmes are a specialty! With Soul's Escapes, there's no one-size-fits-all retreat: you can have your own retreat, with one-to-one services designed around your dates, requirements and preferences.

Imagine immersing yourself in the unspoilt Cambodian jungle with one-on-one private forest bathing and yoga in ancient Khmer temples. Or learning to slow down while mastering meditation with Buddhist monks in Laos. Or practicing yoga with stargazing in the desert to feel at one with the universe. Each retreat is carefully designed to provide healing and nurturing in unique surroundings.

Whether you join the small, exclusive groups or choose to travel on a tailor-made retreat with private one-to-one instructors and services, you will find a unique programme that will transform your perspective about yourself, your life, and the planet you live in.



Suitable for: Anyone who is ready to live, explore and evolve.

When: Throughout the year.

Accommodation: Private rooms in luxury boutique hotels, private villas, or glamorous luxury camps offering excellent standards of service, quality and comfort.

How much: Prices vary according to retreat, destination and dates. See website for details.

Find out more:

soulescapes.com

Get social:

 [@soulescapes](https://www.instagram.com/soulescapes)

 [soulescapes8115](https://www.youtube.com/soulescapes8115)

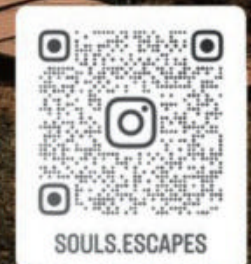


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Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Essential Nature Yoga Retreats - Various Locations, UK

Essential Nature Yoga Retreats combine authentic yoga and meditation with the experience of the wonder of the natural world — whether seeing huge flocks of geese in the winter sky, thousands of puffins in the early summer or listening to the waves on an island beach at sunset. During each retreat, experienced teachers guide the practices of yoga and meditation that, by releasing the tension and stress of daily life, leave us more receptive to a profound connection to the wonder of the natural world that surrounds us — and that we are part of. The benefits of both practice and time spent in nature provides an opportunity for the mind to quieten, the breath to relax and deepen, and for us to be inspired in the depths of our being. It can ignite a sense of wonder and awe for life, and our place in it, that will stay with you long after you've returned home.



Suitable for: All. Daily practice includes morning hatha classes, meditation and yoga nidra. As well as guided walks and trips, there is also time and space to simply be in nature, time to reflect and enjoy.

When: 14-16 April, Isle of Wight; 14-20 & 21-27 May, Isle of Mull; 2-9 September, Island of Iona; 19-22 October, Isle of Wight; 23-26 November, Walsingham, Norfolk; 11-14 January & 18-21 January 2024, Glastonbury


Accommodation: Varies according to retreat & location.

How much: Refer to website for full details.



Find out more: essentialnatureyoga.co.uk

Get social:

 [nicked1969](https://www.facebook.com/nicked1969)

Essential Nature Yoga and Meditation Retreats

May '23 - Isle of Mull
September - Iona
October - Isle of Wight
November - Norfolk
January '24 - Glastonbury



www.essentialnatureyoga.co.uk



Isabel Lankester Yoga

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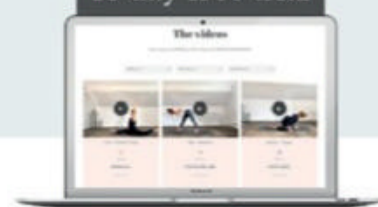
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Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Pasitheia Yoga Retreat — Portugal



This Portuguese retreat is based in the beautiful village of Vermelha, just outside Cadaval, in the region of Lisbon. It includes sunrise hatha, afternoon meditation, sunset yin or restorative yoga — all overlooking the stunning village and mountainous backdrop from the rooftop terrace. Enjoy three freshly-prepared meals each day, along with daily activities, including nature walks, wine tours and a visit to the fabulous local Buddha Eden Gardens. Very relaxed vibe with rules kept to a minimum. There are no strict diets to follow if you prefer not to, and if you would like to drink coffee, wine or beer, you can! The beautiful traditional Portuguese house that you will be staying in has lots of relaxation areas inside. Outside, take a swim in the pool, chill out on the sun loungers, or soak up the views from the roof terrace.



Suitable for: Suitable for all yoga abilities. Hatha, yin, restorative and nidra.


When: Open from 3 March through to 31 October 2023. During this time there are also some themed retreats, such as Yoga for Anxiety, Yoga & Wine, Yoga for Menopause, there's even a celebration of Pride in June too. Check website for more information.

Accommodation: You will be sleeping in a luxury twin or double room, with a shared bathroom. Three meals a day, two yoga classes and one meditation session.

Find out more: thispasithealife.com

Get social:

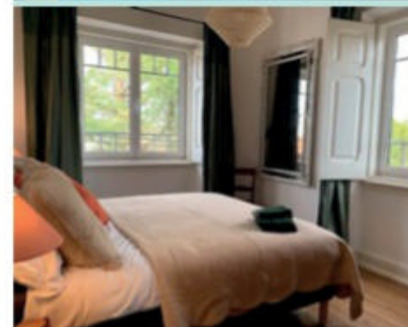
 [@pasitheayogaretreat](https://www.instagram.com/pasitheayogaretreat)

 [pasitheayogaretreat](https://www.facebook.com/pasitheayogaretreat)

How much: From €150pp per night.



Pasitheia
Yoga



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We are very relaxed at Pasitheia Yoga Retreat, so you can stay for as long as your schedule allows...though we know you will want to stay for longer than you plan!

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THIS PASITHEA LIFE – Yoga
Retreat Portugal

thispasithealife.com

Yogarise Retreats — Spain, UK

Pack your bags and let Yogarise take care of the rest! Think down-to-earth, fun and high-quality teaching from the best in the biz, with unique venues and all the usual great Yogarise vibes. All you need to decide is which retreat is calling your name.



Suitable for: Everyone! Yogarise Retreats welcomes beginners and seasoned practitioners alike. The teacher will adapt the practice to the needs of the group and will learn as much as they can about you and your experience before you arrive. Suitable for solo travellers, mates, mum/dad & daughter/son combos and couples (18+ only).

When: This year Yogarise is running three retreats, including destinations in the UK and Spain:

13-17 May: **True Nature Retreat (Andalusia, Spain)**

4-7 August: **Wild Meadow Retreat (near Lewes, UK)**

26-30 October: **City Escape (Valencia, Spain)**

Accommodation: Yogarise partners with venues with a good carbon footprint that offer comfortable and unique accommodation. From a restored traditional farmhouse in the Andalusian countryside, to a modern eco-home in rural Sussex, and a boutique hotel in the heart of Valencia's old town, each location provides a welcoming home away from home.

How much: Deposits start at just £150 and interest-free, monthly payment plans are available to spread the cost. Prices start at £650 and include twice daily yoga, a 'deep dive' workshop, one or more local excursions, and all meals, plus unlimited tea and fruit.

Find out more: yogarise.london/yoga-retreats/

Get social:

📷 @yogariselondon



Treat yourself to a Yogarise Retreat.

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Andalusia, Spain
13th-17th May 2023

WILD MEADOW RETREAT
Near Lewes, UK
4th-7th August 2023

CITY ESCAPE
Valencia, Spain
26th-30th Oct 2023

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Rina Golan Retreats – Oxfordshire, UK

All-inclusive retreats structured to support your wellbeing in a space where the group supports the healing process, nurturing a safe environment where everyone can heal and grow. Over four days you'll be guided on a gentle detox to nourish and rebalance your system, allowing you to return to yourself and feel lighter in mind and body. The programme includes yoga, meditation, delicious clean food, sound healing, dancing and nature walks, all designed to support your transformation. All activities optional, so you can choose to take part fully or simply to rest. Each retreat is an initiation: to prepare the body, creating a safe container where you can surrender and let go of what is not serving you, in order to be reborn into the version of yourself that is aligned with all that you value, with your dharma.



Find out more: rinagolan.co/retreats

Get social:

@rinagolan_wellbeing

RinaGolanWellbeing

Suitable for: Hatha flow, restorative and yin.

When: Spring retreat: 7-10 April; Autumn retreat: 22-25 September.
Plus: virtual five-day cleanse once a season.

Accommodation: Waterperry House, a stunning manor house in rural Oxfordshire, surrounded by eight acres of landscaped gardens, a river and wildlife. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to explore the grounds, meditate in the silent garden and enjoy the fresh air. (Plus: when you book a retreat, 30 trees will be donated in your honour via TreeSisters.)

How much: £695 shared room (4 people per room); £895 twin room; £995 single occupancy. Includes organic food, shakes, accommodation, and all workshops. All rooms have shared bathrooms.



Spring Retreat
April 7th - 12th, 2023

Autumn Retreat
September 22nd-25th, 2023



£100 discount
to OM
subscribers

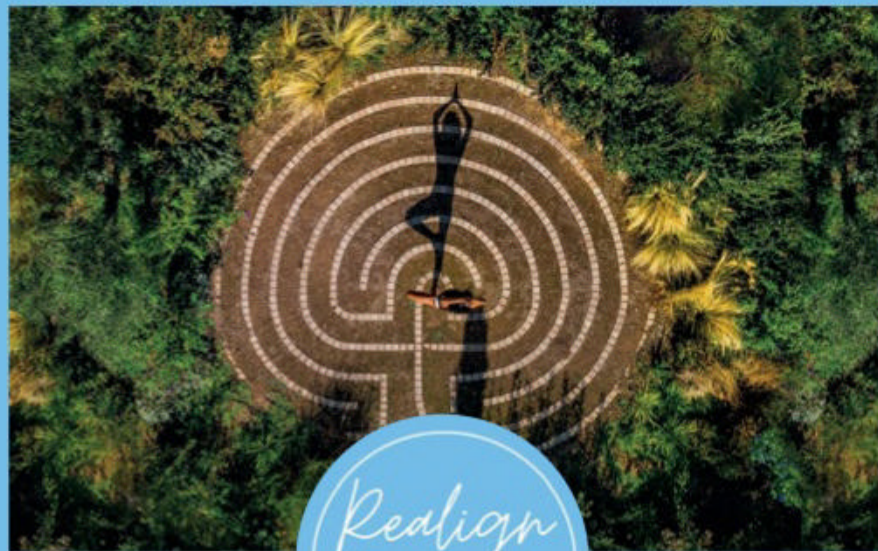
Seasonal cleanse retreats

Waterperry House, Oxfordshire

Over four days you will be guided on a gentle cleanse to detox, nourish and rebalance your system, allowing you to return to yourself and feel lighter in mind and body.

The program is designed to support your process of transformation guided by a highly experienced team of practitioners including a psychotherapist, dance teachers, sound healers, massage therapists, artists and nature lovers.

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Realign
Retreats

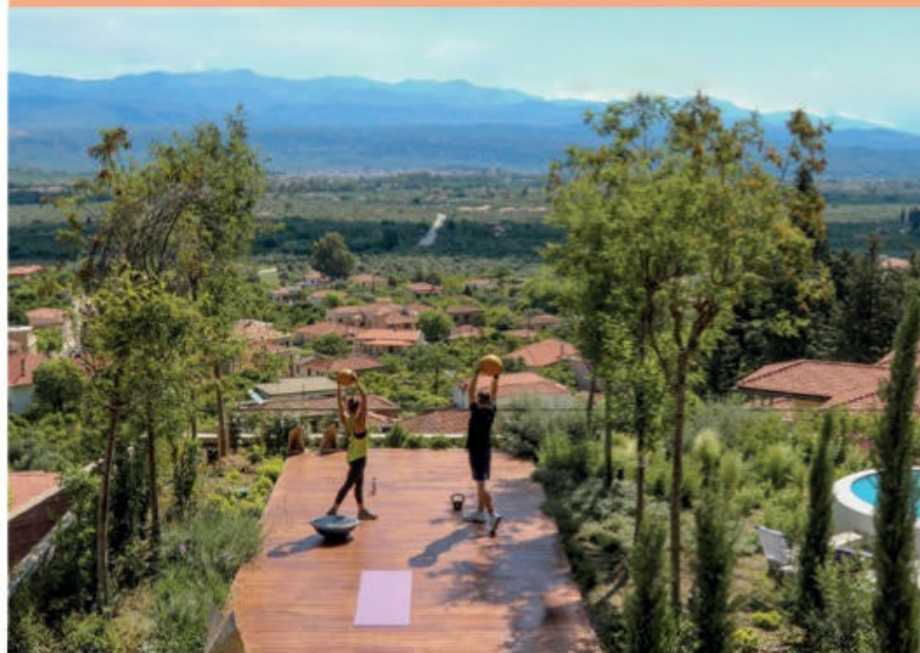


Disconnect from the stresses of everyday life and reconnect with yourself, nature and tranquillity.

Realign Retreats is for anyone looking for a life-enhancing experience with lasting benefits. Their mission is to help you disconnect from the world and realign with yourself, so that you leave the retreat feeling strong and streamlined, centred, and relaxed, and fortified with energy.

realign-retreats.com

Realign Retreats — Greek Spa and Yoga Retreat



Realign Retreats are hosting the 'Greek Spa and Yoga Retreat,' taking place 24-29 June 2023 at the award-winning Euphoria Retreat in Greece, with international yoga teacher, Sarah Highfield. The five-night, six-day retreat promises to help guests disconnect from the stresses of everyday life and reconnect with themselves, nature and tranquillity. Realign Retreats is for anyone looking for a life-enhancing experience with lasting benefits. Their mission is to help you disconnect from the world and realign with yourself, so that you leave the retreat feeling strong and streamlined, centred, and relaxed, and fortified with energy.

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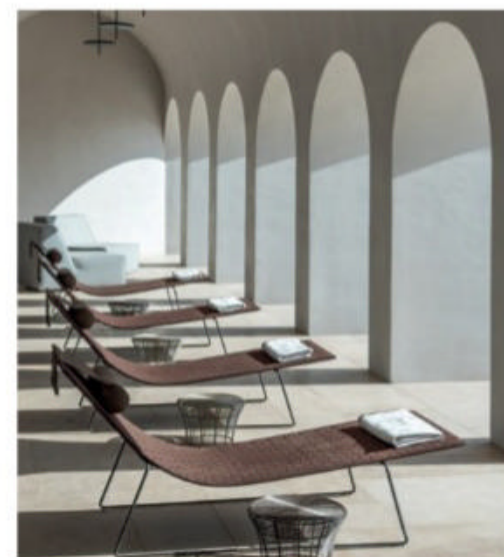


When: 24-29 June, 2023

Suitable for: Suitable for all types of yoga styles.

Accommodation: Accommodation is at the award winning Spa Resort Euphoria Retreat in Greece

How much: Prices from €2,550pp.

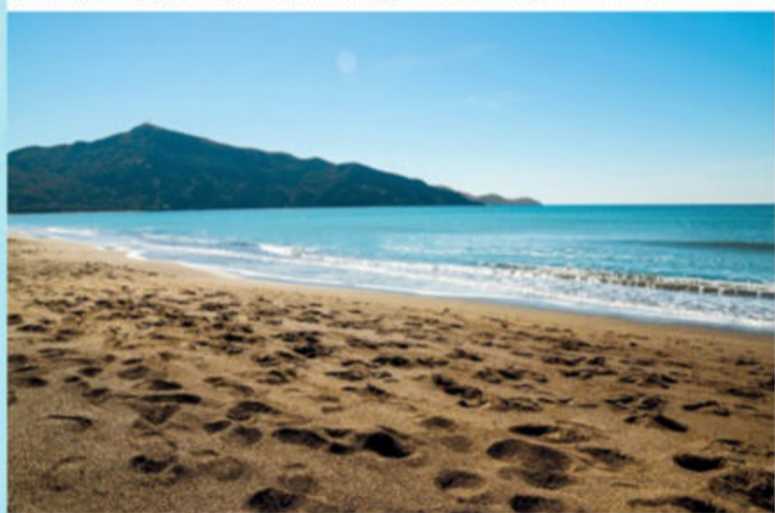


Find out more: realign-retreats.com

Get social: @realign.retreats

Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Jackie Ngu's Beginner to Trapeze Yoga Retreat— Turkey & Wales



Retreats that will introduce you to the full benefits of Yoga Trapeze. Suitable for beginners, no experience required. Yoga trapeze sessions will take place in a beautiful shala. You will also have the chance to experience other activities like biking, paddleboarding, hiking or just chill and read a book.



Suitable for: Suitable for all.

When: Turkey (Dalyan): 20 September, 2023 (7 nights); Wales: 20 October, 2023 (3 nights)

Accommodation: Stay in ensuite single or twin rooms.

How much: Prices between £660 - £1125. Deposit of £250 to secure place.



Find out more:

[Booking.successtours.com](https://www.booking.successtours.com)

Get social:

Instagram: @Jackies_yoga



Saffron Life

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is bringing you a unique Yoga Trapeze retreat taking you outside of your comfort zone!



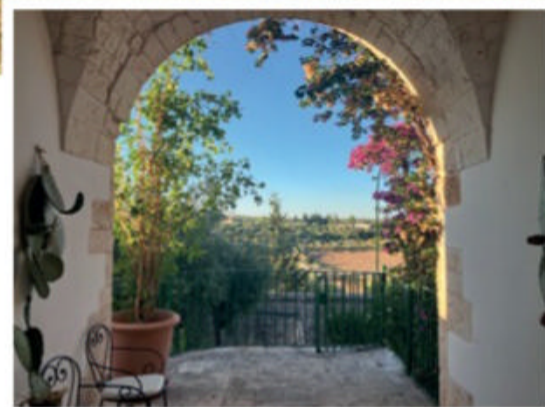
No experience is required. You don't even need to have practiced Yoga before.

All you need to bring with you is an open mind and a willingness to have fun.

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Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

Yoga Light Retreats — Morocco, Canary Islands, and the UK



Yoga instructor Ceri Lee invites you to three sublime retreats this year in uniquely beautiful venues — in Morocco, at a beautiful boutique retreat near Marrakech, La Gomera in the Canary Islands, and the UK's dreamy Lake District. Take valuable time to reconnect with your authentic self through yoga and meditation, regardless of your prior experience.



Suitable for: All levels.

When: 2023 retreat dates: 22-29 April (Morocco); 24 June - 1 July (La Gomera); 5-8 October (UK).

Accommodation: Prices vary according to the level of luxury and location, with the option of private or shared accommodation.

How much: See website for details.

Find out more: yoga-light.com/retreats/

Get social: [@ceriyogalight](https://www.instagram.com/ceriyogalight)



Take time to reclaim your authentic self



Yoga retreats in Morocco, La Gomera, and the UK with Ceri Lee

yoga-light.com/retreats/

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Wild Times Retreats — UK & overseas

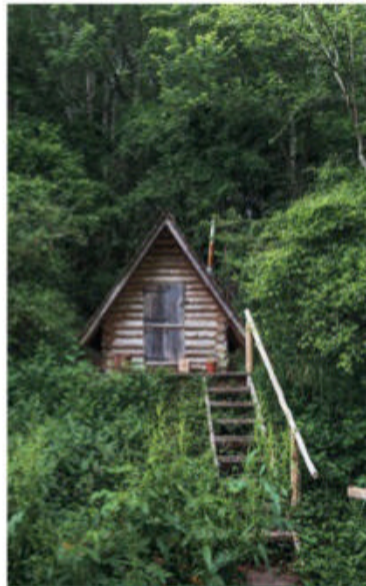
The Wild Times are extraordinary experiences to help you re-wild, explore, ground and rest. They love to bring people together for retreats in unique, incredible natural places to have fun, relax and challenge themselves and leave smiling, often salty, windswept and a little bit more wild.

These retreats are all about helping people connect: to themselves, others and the Earth.

Connecting to themselves through yoga, meditation and slow, embodied practices; to others through walking, talking, swimming together and roasting marshmallows around campfires; and to nature through a range of activities and workshops during retreats in beautiful locations from Lake District cottages and cabins in Cornwall to Moroccan riads.

Workshops have included: foraging, bushcraft, breathwork, herbal tea making, nature connection meditations, soundbaths, paddleboard yoga, creative writing and more.

The Wild Times are passionate about nature connection, adventures and teaching people how to properly rest, whilst also helping them out of their comfort zones to increase their confidence and resilience.



Suitable for: Suitable for all types of yoga styles. All sessions are non-intimidating, with options for all levels of yogi in each vinyasa, yin, yoga nidra and paddleboard yoga class.

When: Held throughout the year across the UK and abroad, with adventures in Morocco, Italy and Sweden currently being created.

Accommodation: Accommodation ranges from cabins and yurts with log burners deep in the woods, and historic 16th Century cottages in the Lake District, to beautiful Moroccan riads.

How much: From around £400 for a long weekend retreat including all food, activities, yoga and accommodation.

Find out more: thewildtimes.co

Get social: [@thewildtimesco](https://www.instagram.com/thewildtimesco)

the WILD TIMES

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to reconnect to yourself,
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A Moroccan yoga and surf paradise

Liberate your senses at Morocco's pristine eco-friendly Paradis Plage wellness resort

Paradis Plage is a dreamy eco resort in Morocco, nestled between the Atlas Mountains and a stunning sandy beach that extends for miles.

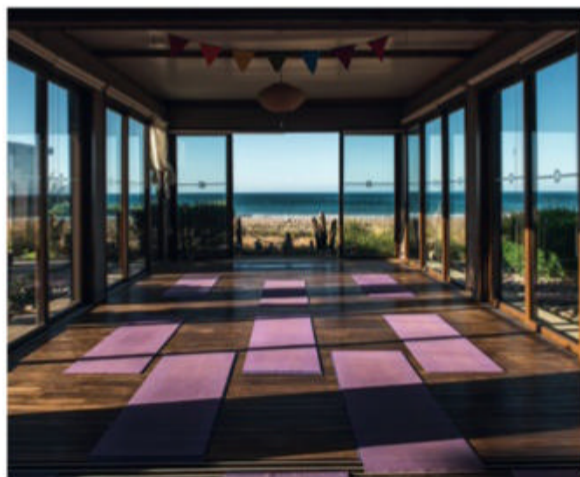
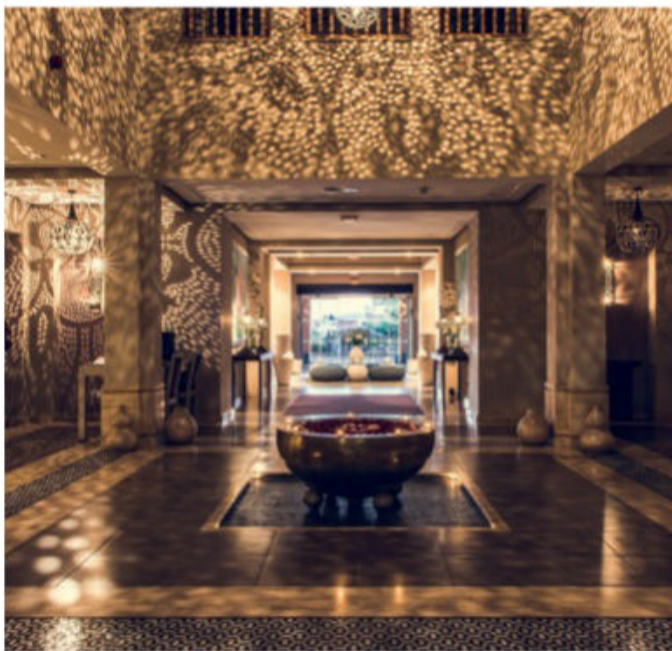
As the first eco resort in the north-west African country — it has now been awarded the prestigious Green Key label for six years in a row — it stands out as something of a pioneer in terms of showcasing sustainability in Moroccan wellness holidays.

That means you can expect the freshest organic foods you will have ever tasted, sourced from local farms and markets, plus all-natural Moroccan products, such as argan oil, saffron and ghassoul in the amazing eco spa, where wellness dreams really do come true.

Located just north of the bustling city of Agadir, Paradis Plage offers a peaceful escape for international visitors, located just four hours flight time from the UK.

It's a place that loves yoga too, and there will be plenty of opportunities to roll out your mat.

Once you've seen the stunning yoga shala overlooking the ocean you'll definitely be inspired to embed a regular practice into your daily routine here.



Surfing and chilling

There are countless other activities to try out too, especially the surfing.

This true surfer's paradise is close to some of the best surf spots in the world, many just a few minutes drive away.

The Moroccan coast generally is regarded as one of best places to get to grips with riding the waves in the sun — better weather than Newquay, and a lot closer than Hawaii or California!

Or you can come here just to chill and enjoy a relaxing beach holiday, soaking up the near-endless sunshine, and spoil yourself with a calming massage in the sumptuous eco spa.

It's far enough away from the hustle and bustle of Agadir to provide complete respite for those seeking some quiet downtime away from all the drama of city life.

Around the resort you can also explore

three hectares of beautiful tropical gardens right on the beach.

Commitment to sustainability

Above all, Paradis Plage takes its responsibilities as an international eco resort very seriously, showcasing best practice in all things sustainability.

That's no better illustrated by its success in the Green Key awards, a leading standard for excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation in the tourism sector.

Its teams are well versed in the sustainability drive, with training and education a key part of every staff member and even among suppliers.

By involving workers and suppliers, and explaining the reasons behind every stage of its environmental project, the aim is to have a tangible impact on the daily habits



of both individuals and firms that will be adopted and shared among others.

Supporting the community

This award-winning resort also aims to raise environmental awareness across the broader community which it serves.

As well as removing single-use plastics within the hotel some time ago, the venue works with the local community to educate about the impact and harms of plastic use.

Regular beach clean-ups are also organised and there are collaborations in place with Surf Rider Foundation Morocco to assist in other environmental actions.

It's a great example for other resorts to follow as Morocco's tourism industry grows and an ethos that's perfectly in keeping with the ahimsa yoga mindset of 'doing no harm'.

Sourcing local products

One of the main ways this sustainability drive manifests is in the importance of harnessing the local supply chain as much as possible, rather than shipping in goods and services from distance.

The food here is organic, delicious, and sourced locally, so it will always be the freshest available.

There is plenty of choice for all, and lots of variety too, with a range of bars

and restaurants to pick from, including a great selection of vegan dishes. The eco spa too is also a showcase for Paradis Plage's environmental commitment, where you'll experience fantastic, natural Moroccan products.

Ultimate wellness holiday

It's an impressive undertaking but one where this resort continues to thrive and excel.

For most people, Paradis Plage gets all the basics right as well, whether you're just here to relax on the beach or spend time indulging in the spa.

There's enough yoga here to keep you busy as well, even if you don't want to try your hand at surfing or any of the other activities.

The yoga shala offers three regular classes per day (typically at 8am, 11am and 5.30pm) and private lessons are also available on request.

There's also an indoor and outdoor fitness centre if you're looking to vary your workout.

In the evenings, you can watch the breathtaking sunsets over the Atlantic, enjoy a cool drink before supper, and afterwards retire to one of the plush suites or villas for a dreamy night's sleep.

For more information on Paradis Plage and how to book visit: paradisplage.com

om Competition

WIN Yoga-Mad goodies bundle for 3 lucky winners — worth £280 each

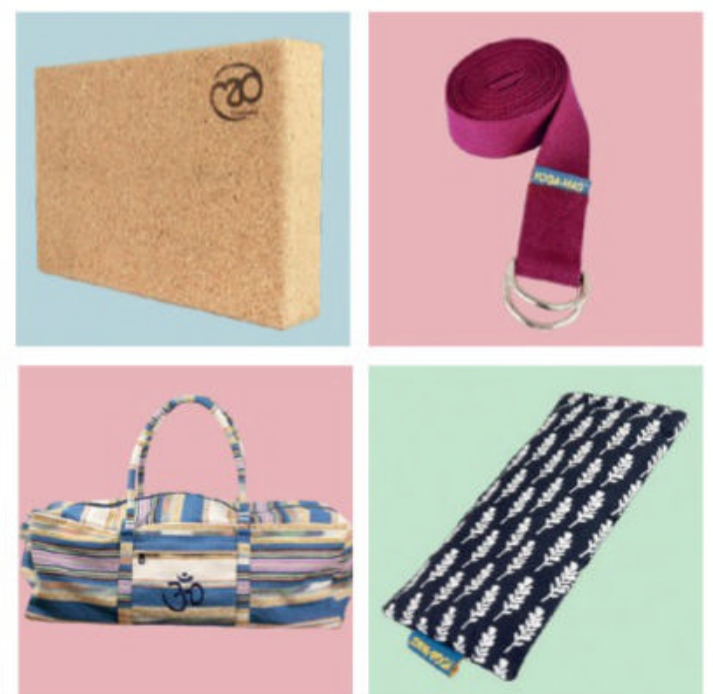
Start your yoga journey with Yoga-Mad with this magnificent yoga goodies bundle worth over £280 each. Trusted by yoga teachers, studios, as well as individual yogis and yoginis around the world, you will love these products at your next yoga class, whether in the studio or at home! Three lucky winners to be chosen!



Here's what each lucky winner will receive:

- SureGrip Natural Yoga Mat / Eco Yoga Mat x 1 (choice of colours available)
- Cork Yoga Block x 1
- Cork Yoga Brick x 1
- Deluxe Yoga & Pilates Kit Bag x 1 (choice of colours available)
- Organic Yoga Belt 2m x 1 (choice of colours available)
- Grip Socks x 1 (choice of colours available)
- Yoga top x 1 (choose any top)
- Leggings x 1 (choose any leggings)
- Yoga bra x 1 (choose any bra)

Find out more about the world of Yoga-Mad at:
mad-hq.com



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Three prizes to be won. Worth approximately £280 per winner, could be more dependent on style of clothing chosen.
Closing date for entries: 19th April 2023

To enter visit: ommagazine.com/yoga-mad

OMFM

OM FOR MEN

Inside:

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On The Mat': Ravi Dixit

Page 85 Man On The Mat:
Vatayanasana (Horse Pose)





Meet our

MAN ON THE MAT

Ravi Dixit is OM's inspirational 'Man on the Mat', encouraging more men (and everyone else) to try yoga. Here, he outlines details of his own yoga journey, including an incredible comeback from injury after a road traffic accident in Goa. (And don't forget: you can even practice with him live at this year's OM Yoga Show in London this October!)

Ravi 'the smiling yogi' was born in India into a family of spiritual teachers and from a young age he grew up with a yoga practice as part of his daily life. In his early twenties he lived at several ashrams in Rishikesh, where he studied Hatha and Ashtanga Yoga. The years following, he worked as the resident teacher at one of the top retreats in Goa, where he led classes for thousands of students from all over the world.

In 2017, he moved to London and quickly found his way in the city as a popular teacher. He is passionate about making the principles of traditional Indian yoga understandable and relatable for everyone. In his classes, he combines movement, breath and sacred mantras in an accessible and playful way. "Yoga is not about the perfect pose, it's about reconnecting with yourself and finding harmony between you and you," he says. "This will bring peace and health to your body and mind."

OM recently caught up with him to find out more.

How did you first get into yoga early on?

I started doing yoga when I was nine years old. I grew up in India. My grandfather was an astrologer and he started teaching me how to chant mantras and practice mudras. From that moment yoga was part of my daily life.

When did you start teaching?

In my early twenties, I moved to Rishikesh to study yoga in the ashrams. I practiced yoga daily with Master Yogi Ji and I naturally transitioned into teaching guests in the ashram. That's when I really started living the yogic lifestyle and it felt like I had found my destined path in life. I think we are all forever students of yoga; the practice is mostly about understanding yourself, which is an ongoing journey.

How has your life evolved since committing fully to yoga?

Personally, it changed a lot of things in my life. Once I got deeper into my practice, parts of my life that I didn't need anymore naturally fell away and were replaced by better things. I worked in Goa for many years teaching retreat groups, which was a wonderful time as I met so many people who are still friends to this day. Professionally, it has made me more connected and patient, and teaching yoga has allowed me to travel the world. Overall, yoga has made me a more loving person.

Being from India, you teach traditional forms of yoga such as Hatha, Ashtanga and Pranayama, and you speak passionately about authenticity and going back to the roots of yoga. What would you like people to know about this?

We're all connected to our own roots and the roots of yoga, it's part of our natural being. Yoga is universal knowledge: although the practice has roots in Asia, yoga does not belong to me or you. Traditional or authentic to me means we don't add our own spices to the practice, but we come back to the original recipes provided by the Rishis and Sages, the original fundamentals and essence of the asana and pranayama practice. I teach based on the values and principles of the yoga I grew up with in India, but at the same time, I'm also a young man living in London and understand the challenges of daily Western life. My intention is to make these principles and values approachable and show everyone that a practice can be simple but very beneficial to your daily life. You don't need any fancy clothes or an expensive mat or to meditate for hours. Yoga is about connecting with yourself in any place at any time.

You moved to London in 2017. How was the transition for you moving from India to the UK?

When I first moved to the UK I felt very welcomed, it was so wonderful to see people were open to learning about traditional yoga. But when I first visited some yoga studios in London, I was quite shocked to see a Ganesha statue by the door of the studio, where people put their shoes in front of it, and a Buddha statue in the toilet. In Hindu culture that is considered disrespectful. That's when I realised many people here don't really know our culture but hopefully they will be interested to learn.

Do you think it is important to use Sanskrit in a yoga practice or when teaching?

I use Sanskrit because it's the way I learned yoga; I would not know any other way. I don't think it's important to use Sanskrit if it's not the way you learned it. It's more important that you understand what yoga really is and have respect for the tradition, than the language you learn it in.

What would you say are the biggest benefits of practicing yoga?

Yoga is not only a physical exercise. Yoga is

the union between you to you; it's the way to get to know yourself better. Yoga creates harmony between mind, body and brain. If these are all connected properly, the result is a healthy body and a balanced life. Whatever is going on in our life, with long working hours, daily pressures, and a busy family life or social commitments, through yoga we can manage to stay balanced. For thousands of years people have been practicing yoga to maintain balance in their life. We are born with yoga, but people have forgotten they have all the tools to stay healthy and balanced.

If we only see yoga as 'fitness' and we do not convert it into a way of life, does it still make sense to practice it regularly?

Yes it still does. Of course. A physical yoga practice still has benefits for a healthy body and mind. And with a regular physical yoga practice, hopefully a natural shift into the spiritual practice will come. It is all connected: the body, mind and the soul. One does not live without the other.

Is there something you feel is often overlooked in yoga?

Yes, I think pranayama is often forgotten.



Photos: Cecilia Cristolovean-Csiky (yogaandphoto.com)



Pranayama is yogic science based on the expansion of Prana Shakti, our life force energy. Breath is a tool to improve the quality and quantity of prana in the body, but pranayama is more subtle than just breath. When we're working with pranayama we are working with energy channels, called the nadis. These nadis are the channels where our energy flows; they exist in our body, although they are not physical, you cannot see them. Breath helps the body to maintain this life force power; when our breath is gone, life is gone. It stimulates each organ to work in the right manner and heightens our level of consciousness. Stress, poor maintenance of our health or certain thoughts can create blockages in our system. Working with the principles of pranayama can help clear our nadis to ensure energy can circulate in our system the way it is meant to be. The result is to feel lighter, fit and healthy, both physically and mentally. Since pranayama became a part of my daily life, it has helped me to understand who I am, what I am doing, why I am doing it – these are things it made very clear.

Is there one pranayama that you always include in your own practice?

Nadi Shodana Pranayama – alternate nostril breathing. This is one of the pranayama that can help to clear many issues, both mental and physical. If you apply this pranayama correctly in a daily manner, there are so many benefits. It will bring immediate mental clarity, it heals the nervous system, boosts energy and strengthens the immune system. You will feel lighter and more connected very quickly. Practicing this pranayama regularly, you don't even really need to do many other pranayama.

As a male yoga teacher, why do you think yoga is still more popular with women than men?

I think there is a general misconception, especially in the West, that flexibility is

mandatory to do yoga, and generally women just tend to be more flexible than men. When you look at the history of yoga in Asian cultures, traditionally yoga teachers were mostly male and yoga was seen as a spiritual practice and a way to maintain overall health, with less focus on the physical aspect, such as flexibility. Yoga is definitely for everyone and you can be any age or any level of fitness to benefit from yoga.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about yoga?

You don't need a long yoga class to feel the benefits. Just doing 10 minutes of yoga a day can change your life. Doing a few postures with the right alignment and breath can have more benefit than an hour-long yoga class that is not properly aligned or grounded.

Besides yoga, what else are you passionate about?

I am truly passionate teaching yoga and seeing the change in people when they

get into the practice. I've had students come in with anxiety and fatigue and seen them open up and bloom to better health and happiness. I love it when yoga creates community; this is why I especially enjoy doing retreats. People may arrive as strangers and leave as friends, and we have such a great time, there is so much fun and joy.

You had a severe accident a few years ago. Can you tell us about this?

In November 2020 I had an accident while riding my scooter in Goa, I don't actually know what happened, but I was found on the side of the road with severe injuries. I had a brain injury and was in a coma, with many fractures in my face, jaw and spine. I was put on a ventilator and spent over a month in the ICU. I couldn't breathe by myself, I could not move, speak or eat all of that time and suffered further complications such as collapsed lungs, kidney infections and sepsis. Initially, doctors did not think I

would survive, or if I did, what quality of life I would have afterwards. It's truly a miracle I survived and that I am teaching yoga again. When I left the hospital, I had lost 18kg in weight (almost 3 stone) and had to learn how to walk and eat again.

Do you feel that yoga contributed to your healing process?

Absolutely. Before I get into that, I do want to say that the doctors and nurses who looked after me really saved my life. Without them I would not be here and I am forever grateful to them. I also believe in the power of prayer and have been so blessed that many people prayed for me and sent me positive energy; I believe that is what pulled me through. Once I regained consciousness, yoga was my lifeline and rehabilitation. When I was on a ventilator and I could not move or breathe, I would chant mantras in my mind. It got me through the hardest of days. When my body slowly started recovering, I would do yoga in my hospital bed just by moving my arms and legs. And when I was finally able to breathe again, I did pranayama to get my lungs back to full health. Yoga and walking was really my only form of rehabilitation. Doctors told me that they believe I survived because my body and mind were strong from the yoga at the time of the accident.

Did the experience change you personally, or spiritually?

People often ask me if I saw anything special while I was in a coma. I honestly do not remember anything, I didn't see a white light, or have some profound spiritual experience, but my life did change after the accident. I feel grateful for the second life that has been given to me. I have more clarity about the things that are important to me and appreciate life more. I try to consciously make more free time to relax and enjoy more time with family and friends. And something shifted inside me that made me very close to nature and animals. I love spending time and connecting with animals, their souls are so pure.

What are you working on right now?

We have several retreats this year in Bali, Spain, Greece and the UK that I am really looking forward to. I also host regular classes and workshops in London, as well as teach weekly online classes and have an online membership programme. Next year, in 2024, I'll be starting my teacher training course, which I'm very excited about, so I'm busy with the preparations for that. Lots of great things coming!

RETREAT WITH RAVI

Catch up with Ravi Dixit on retreat this year.

Andalusia, Spain

17-24 June, 2023
24 June – 1 July, 2023

Kefalonia, Greece

23-30 September, 2023
30 September – 7 October, 2023

Anything else you want to share?

OM has been so supportive ever since I moved to the UK and I really enjoy picking a new asana for my 'Man on the Mat' column' each month. I also think the magazine is doing a great job at inclusivity showing a variety of people on the covers. Who knew I could be a cover model! I'm also looking forward to the OM Yoga Show this year and I will be there for the full three days, so please come say hello! 🙏

Find out more about Ravi Dixit online at: ravi.yoga or connect via Instagram @raviyoga_goa



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June 24-1 July
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MAN ON THE MAT WITH RAVI DIXIT

VATAYANASANA (HORSE POSE)



Vatayanasana is a pose from the Ashtanga intermediate series. The name translates as 'horse pose' and is a unique kind of balancing pose.

BENEFITS

- Increases flexibility. The stretches in this asana are advanced and with regular

practice can release trapped tension from the muscles.

- Improves blood circulation of the lower body and specifically through the hip region.
- Reduces stiffness in the body and relieves joint pains.
- Strengthens muscles and bones.
- Improves posture and can improve minor

asymmetry in the hips and legs.

- Enhances balance, focus and concentration.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Not warming up. This asana requires considerable flexibility so always warm up the body before attempting the pose, especially in the hip area.
- Impatience: the flexibility will come with time. Be patient and go for small improvements with everyday practice. In the beginning, this pose may be difficult and the knee may feel painful so don't push yourself too much and listen to your body.

BEGINNERS TIPS

- Use a blanket for support. Before bending the leg into half lotus pose, put a blanket under the knee for comfort and to help with balance.
- If you're struggling to get into this asana, start with sitting down and do a simple butterfly pose to warm up and help the hips to get used to deep stretching. Then try a modified version of the pose: start with half lotus standing up with your back against the wall for support, don't put the knee on the floor. Fold your arms like in eagle pose.

AWARENESS

- Vatayansana helps improve concentration. It requires focus, core awareness and while balancing the body on one foot and one knee, concentration power enhances.

Caution: As a beginner, please only practice this pose with the supervision of an experienced yoga teacher and be careful if you have any knee pain or injuries. If at any point you experience pinching pain or discomfort, stop right away. Please avoid this pose during pregnancy. 🙏

Ravi Dixit is an Indian yoga teacher living in London, passionate about making traditional yoga understandable for everyone. Visit: ravi.yoga or connect on Instagram @raviyoga_goa



Seeking shadows to reclaim wholeness



Life's challenges can loom over us like dark shadows sometimes. Finding time and space to contemplate those shadows can help us to transform them. **By Lauren Bloxham**

There's a long, cool figure standing in front of me, she's shaped a little like me, but the early morning sun, like a distorted mirror, stretches her length...I raise a hand and wiggle my fingers; she wiggles her foot-long fingers back at me. A sad, lonely feeling rises within me, she seems a long way away and I can't reach her. I want to draw my shadow closer, bundle her up and keep her warm.

I spend a moment contemplating this spontaneous reaction to seeing my shadow. My shadow is an aspect of me that's distant and untouchable, but very much there and real. She's sometimes subtle and not always seen, and sometimes, just like today, she's there, clearly outlined and right in front of me.

I turn towards the sun and continue my walk. As the path meanders and the sun rises, so my shadow falls differently. I watch her changing shape and length on the ground around me, sometimes we walk side by side, sometimes I walk towards her, and sometimes she disappears from my sight completely. My shadow and I walk within a broader environment, grassy dunes, the ocean to the north, a patchwork of farms to the south. We are just dots on this ancient landscape, passers-by, temporary visitors. I feel small.

This broader view shows me how close we really are, my

shadow and I, how deeply connected we are. My feelings change as I remember that we are made of the very same stuff as the landscape all around us. We are enveloped in life, and we are an integrated aspect of it too. I feel a deep sense of connection and I am full again, just as we reach the top of the dune and descend its sandy banks towards home.

Making sense of the shadow self

Discerning and making sense of the shadow aspects of our being can be challenging when life is busy, and our minds are full of responsibilities and obligations. Sometimes we actively avoid meeting our shadows; we fill our time with activities and people. But integrating our whole self, reclaiming the fragmented, distorted, and distant aspects of our minds takes time, space, and contemplation.

When life becomes challenging, when we're forced to sit up and pay attention, when the demands of our circumstances require our complete presence, it is then that our doubts and fears, our traumas and vulnerabilities, our guilt and our shame are clear for us to see. It can feel as though our shadows are 15-foot-tall dark, looming visitors in our lives, and it's at these times that we can feel the cool fear they evoke most acutely.

Compassionate awareness

For many of us, compassionate awareness may not be our go to response to the darker aspects of our experiences. Sometimes it's easier to pass over what is painful, blame others or ignore what is niggling, and bury what we find vulnerable with shame. This is why we meditate, why we take a formal practice. This is what we practice for.

When we arrive in meditation and take in our physical bodies, our breath, or our environments, we get to practice bringing compassionate awareness to what we experience. Recognising it, accepting it, and welcoming it. The sound of a dripping tap, tight hips, stuck breath. It's the little things in life that teach us how to broaden our perspectives and expand our courageous hearts.

We're practicing for the big stuff that life presents, for the times of shock, grief, hardship, and illness. The situations that feel insurmountable and the challenges that feel impossible. The times we don't want to experience, but inevitably will. It's then that we can meet our greatest challenges within a broader landscape of compassionate awareness. After all, the experience is a part of us, this is the experience of our wholeness.

Seeking shadows

The small lessons are the same as the big lessons. Just as we accept the dripping tap, or neighbour's drilling during our peaceful meditation, so we accept the bigger challenges that we face. That's maybe easier said than done, but the practice is the very same.

Take some time to sit or lay now. As you close the eyes take in the sensations of the body. Notice what you feel; you may have just eaten, or perhaps you're hungry, maybe you've been on your

feet all day, or possibly still in bed? Where you've been and what you've been doing has an effect on the body and you'll notice it as you tune in now. There may be sensations that demand your attention...old injuries, niggles, the effects of surgery or treatment. Notice them, greet them, welcome them, let them be the focus of your attention, become the broader awareness around them, curiously taking them in, their qualities and nuances. Notice how long you can hold your attention with them, and be curious about whether their qualities change, or whether how you feel about them changes.

This principle can be extended towards sounds in the environment, what can sometimes feel invasive or unwanted, can challenge our compassionate awareness, strengthening it, broadening it. These challenges are lessons in themselves.

We can extend this principle towards difficult thoughts or feelings we're having too. When we hold thoughts and feelings in our awareness, when we become curious, greeting, and welcoming them, when we let the kinds of fears that cast dark shadows over our experience, become the focus of our awareness and contemplation, they too can become rich lessons to learn as we watch them transform dynamically in front of us.

With compassionate awareness as our landscape, fear, guilt, shame, and judgement become passers-by, temporary dots on the broader landscape of our being. We recognise them with a broader, more rounded perspective, and their power diminishes and our compassion is strengthened. ॐ

Practice yoga with Lauren Bloxham online at: blackdogliving.com or connect on Instagram @blackdogliving





Get off the 'gram

The modern yogi loves a scroll on Instagram. But the moment it becomes an unhealthy habit, fuelling unrealistic expectations or comparisons to others, it's time to hit the brakes. Here's how you can moderate (or even eliminate) the lure of social media

It's springtime and that can mean detox time for a lot of people. But it isn't just alcohol or junk food that we should be mindful of when considering a healthy lifestyle, according to the folks at private rehab clinic, Delamere.

As well as our bodies, we should also focus on taking care of our mental wellbeing, and cutting down on things that can have a negative psychological impact.

We can all be guilty of passing the time by scrolling aimlessly through social media, or glued to Netflix until the early hours. However, over indulgence of digital media can have a negative impact on us. In fact, studies have shown a correlation between a high amount of screen time and experiencing depressive symptoms.

Temporarily disconnecting yourself from the matrix can

bring lots of physical and mental wellbeing benefits. Here, the Delamere team explain the benefits of a digital detox, and why having time away from screens of all types is important.

Why a digital detox is important

Between working all day on a computer, to endlessly scrolling through social media, or streaming your favourite tv shows — that's a lot of screen time! Globally, the average person is estimated to spend a total of 6 hours and 58 minutes per day plugged into the internet, almost like a full working day. If that wasn't worrying enough, there is the link between spending large amounts of screen time and negative mental health, as well as an increased risk of burnout.

If you are regularly getting lost down an online rabbit hole, and it is affecting your mind in a negative manner, you may need to take a digital detox to avoid experiencing burnout.

Benefits felt from taking part in a digital detox will differ from individual to individual. People may feel that they have increased productivity and are able to manage their time better due to spending less time consuming digital media.

You may also find that you are experiencing reduced feelings of anxiety, and an improvement in self-esteem, due to spending less time comparing yourself to others online. Sleep quality may also improve, leaving you feeling more refreshed and alert when taking on day-to-day tasks.

How to do a digital detox

For many people, it's not always as simple as just putting down your phone. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help you to reduce your screen time and develop a healthier relationship with online media. Here are a few ideas:

Set up screen time alerts

A handy way to reduce your time online is to enable screen time tracking on your mobile device. This will update you on your daily average usage and can provide a breakdown of where you are spending the most time. If you are finding that you are spending excessive amounts of time on certain apps, this is an indicator that you need to cut down your usage.

Delete apps from your phone / deactivate your accounts

If you are particularly prone to scrolling for hours on your mobile phone, the most effective way to detox is to delete social media apps from your device, or deactivate your accounts. Sometimes, removing the temptation altogether is the best method for sticking to your goals.

Set yourself limits and stick to them

If you are a little more disciplined when it comes to regulating your screen time and don't wish to delete your apps, you can simply set yourself agreed time limits to use certain apps or websites each day. Make a plan of when you will use digital media for leisure, set time limits and stick to them. You may benefit from setting yourself reminder alerts that will notify you when you've used up your designated time, and that you're ready for a break away from the screens.

Switch off your push notifications

Switching off push notifications is a great way to ensure that you are sticking to agreed screen time limits. By doing this, you are able to reduce the temptation to look at your phone without the constant alerts or notifications. You may find that this can help you focus on day-to-day tasks and be more productive. Notifications can be paused in most smart phone settings or within the individual app itself.

Don't start the day with screens

For many people, the first thing they do when they wake up in the morning is spend time scrolling through their phone. Setting



yourself a rule to not look at your phone as soon as you wake up is a great way to gradually break this habit. Instead, take the time to meditate, to shower or to make a healthy breakfast.

Don't scroll before bed

Doom scrolling is particularly prevalent late at night or whilst in bed. Keeping your brain on high alert whilst scrolling through negative stories can severely disrupt your sleep for the rest of the night, as well as potentially causing feelings of anxiety or distress. Putting your phone or laptop away an hour or two before your usual bedtime is good practice to help your mind to disengage for a better night's sleep.

Choose books over screens

Particularly when it comes to bed time, books — yes, good old-fashioned books — are a much more suitable method for relaxing and unwinding, rather than a digital screen. It worked for centuries prior to the digital age... and it's still as valid today.

Set 'no phone' rules

If you are socialising with friends and family, agree to a 'no phone rule' for a period of time. This will remove any distraction and ensure that everyone is present in the conversation and each other's company.

Download digital detox apps

With the increasing awareness around the need for a digital detox and more conscious media consumption, several apps have been created to help. Yes, this may seem ironic, suggesting downloading more apps to reduce time spent on apps, but these can be handy. The apps can allow you to set yourself time limits for certain apps, and once the limit is up, your phone will not allow you to access the apps until the limit refreshes. ॐ

Find out more about digital detoxing at: delamere.com/addiction-treatment/internet-addiction



How to be a human in a *not-so-human* world

Give up the search for perfect in this crazy world and walk towards the light.

By Gopala Amir Yaffa

I have always considered myself to be a very happy person — and that’s what I teach when I teach yoga. Isn’t enlightenment just ‘big happiness’?

But in the last couple of years, sometimes that happy person seemed very far away. There were even times when I felt incapable of being happy.

I have all the ‘happy tools’ — from my time as a monk in ashrams over 10 years and learning everything I could about yoga and mindfulness in the two decades that followed — but I often feel that I have no time to use these wonderful practices and ideas.

Similarly, I am aware that most humans in the 21st century are experiencing mental health issues. I know I am. It’s pretty hard to be a human in a world that’s not so human anymore. We are not made for this speed, sensory bombardment, being switched on and on-demand all the time.

Usually, evolution happens through thousands of years of us adapting to our slowly-changing environment — but so much has changed for us humans in the last couple of generations and our genetics and brain functions have not

quite caught up to it yet.

From my experience, there is no ‘one fits all’ solution here. The right support, a good friend, loads of exercise, nature, puppies, enough sleep and, of course, yoga and mindfulness, can all together form a path into a place that feels more right.

“Life is too complex to be ‘perfect’, and there is a lot to learn from the imperfections; it is actually the most imperfect and ‘messed up’ people that end up being the best teachers!”

Everyone goes through a rough patch or feels listless on occasion. But depression — the feeling that you might never be happy again — is now so commonplace all over the world. And unfortunately, it is young people (who I work with through Rainbow Yoga) who are becoming the most likely group to screen for symptoms of this mental health condition.

Most of us (me included) are surrounded by beauty and goodness and

opportunities, but taking those first few steps out of the heaviness and darkness and into the light and gratitude and joy can be challenging.

Quite a few years ago, for my 40th birthday, I took some time away from my busy life for some self-nurture. I went to Peru and spent a month with shamans in the beautiful Andes; I have always had a great interest in shamanism. One of the reasons I went there is because I felt that some things in my life, and in me, needed fixing. I felt a great, heavy load on my shoulders.

After four weeks of deep and meaningful inner work, while the shamans were doing magical healing on my spirit, I heard this great voice booming from inside of me that declared: “There is nothing to fix, you are perfect as you are.” I got up, and that was it. I felt whole, which I believe I always was.

Of course, I’m not perfect, no one is. I am in constant evolution; an evolution that will never reach its end. But I’m perfect as I am — and so are you! We are perfect as we are. We are perfect in our imperfections.

We are even perfect as we are when we are depressed. It is okay, and it will

eventually pass and change and evolve into our next entity, like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly through its time in the cocoon.

We always strive for more. It is our human nature to want to make things better and I believe that this is a good instinct. Yet it often leaves us constantly unsatisfied. We run around trying to fix the world, fix the education system, fix others, fix ourselves — I do all the time!

“There is no ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in our lives; rather, there is only ‘heavy’ and ‘light’, and we can dispel the ‘heaviness’ by bringing in more ‘lightness’.”

But I think we are looking at all those with the wrong model, the ‘fixing’ model. You can fix a car: tighten a screw, replace a part, change the oil. But people and the universe at large are much more complex than machines. We are not ‘fixable’, we are constantly evolving.

So many therapies are trying to fix us from the inside and from the outside. The media tries to tell us that we can get a quick fix by popping a pill or buying something. But those rarely have a lasting impact because the road of life is curvy and bumpy and the complexity of it all keeps throwing new challenges and opportunities at us at every turn. Try to fix



it all, you’ll get anxious and burnt out. Go with the flow of it and evolve with it, and you’ll grow.

Fixing is trying to change or replace something. Evolving is accepting what is and becoming better for it. Expanding, and growing because of it. So the solution I’m offering to depression, and everything else that this modern era is throwing our way, is replacing ‘fixing’ with ‘evolving’. Instead of running from it all, let’s embrace it; let’s learn from it and grow. One little step at a time.

Life is too complex to be ‘perfect’, and there is a lot to learn from the imperfections; it is actually the most imperfect and ‘messed up’ people that

end up being the best teachers! If nothing ever happened to you, you have nothing to teach.

What have you learned from your challenges that you can share with the world, with the next generation? This is a question I ask myself and my students often.

Life is like a grinding stone; it can grind you to dust or polish you into a diamond, depending on how you show up for it. The lows are as much an opportunity as the ups.

Here is another lesson I picked up from the shamans in Peru and has helped me a lot at times, a lesson I have transferred to my students as well: the most influential and practical teaching I took from the Andes was the idea that maybe there is no ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in our lives; rather, there is only ‘heavy’ and ‘light’, and we can dispel the ‘heaviness’ by bringing in more ‘lightness’.

This is a fantastic idea! We are not doomed by ‘bad’ things that are happening, or by ‘bad’ things we are feeling. Instead, when we are feeling heaviness weighing us down, we have the power to make things lighter by transforming them with lighter thoughts, lighter words, and lighter actions.

What do you think? A great lesson both for us and all the young people who also find life to be ‘too much’ at times? I’ve been heavy at times...so I know it is! Here’s to more lighter and happier moments and years! ॐ

Gopala Amir Yaffa is the founder, co-director and owner of Rainbow Yoga (rainbowyogatraining.com)



Hold on to your horses:

the Bhagavad Gita's call to action

An appreciation of the beautiful simplicity of the Bhagavad Gita. **By Marja Wilson**

As part of a larger work, the Bhagavad Gita is known as one of the epic Hindu texts widely popular in yoga philosophy. Written about two thousand years ago, its essential theme of body, mind, and spirit awareness is a narrative between Arjuna and the avatar, Krishna. Their dialogue weaves a profound tapestry of poetic wisdom covering a deep enigmatic swath of the worldly and spiritual.

However, the Bhagavad Gita can also be seen in its simplicity at a glance. Training the senses, following one's right path, and the soul's purpose is the subject of many paintings depicting 'Krishna's Chariot'. Galvanising an important passage in chapter six, the scene at the edge of battle shows Krishna and Arjuna on board their chariot. As the great warrior prince approaches impending doom, Krishna controls the powerful team of stallions on the brink of chaos. If a picture's worth a thousand words, this is an emphatic: Hold on to your horses.

The depth in this slogan is uncanny

and perhaps, the centre of the Bhagavad Gita's credo to mental mastery. The metaphorical 'sense-horses' epitomise what we struggle with every day through hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Like unruly animals, the Gita states: The mind is restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate. The original Sanskrit translation from the Katha Upanishad elaborates:

*Know the self as a passenger in a chariot
The body, as simply the chariot.*

*Know the intellect as the charioteer,
And the mind, the reins.*

*The senses are the horses,
And objects of the senses, the distractions
around them.*

*When a man lacks understanding of this,
his mind is never controlled
And his senses do not obey him
as bad horses to a charioteer.*

From a neurological perspective, the goal of calming the mind is regulating the nervous system by controlling the senses. Different types of yoga not only address

our biological map, but opens the mind's eye to our purpose in life called dharma. The skills of attention and awareness cultivated in yoga drives our quiet determination "off the mat and into the world." —*Sean Corn*

Four Paths of Yoga

The goal of yoga is to unite all aspects of the individual. The Bhagavad Gita emphasises four yoga paths: Jana, Karma, Bhakti, Raja. They are designed to work together or alone and do not need to be perfected; merely practiced.

Jana Yoga

In parts of the fourth chapter, the Bhagavad Gita expounds on Jana Yoga as the yoga of knowledge. Translated as 'attending to the goal', the focus is to gain self-knowledge through study, practice, and experience.

Karma Yoga

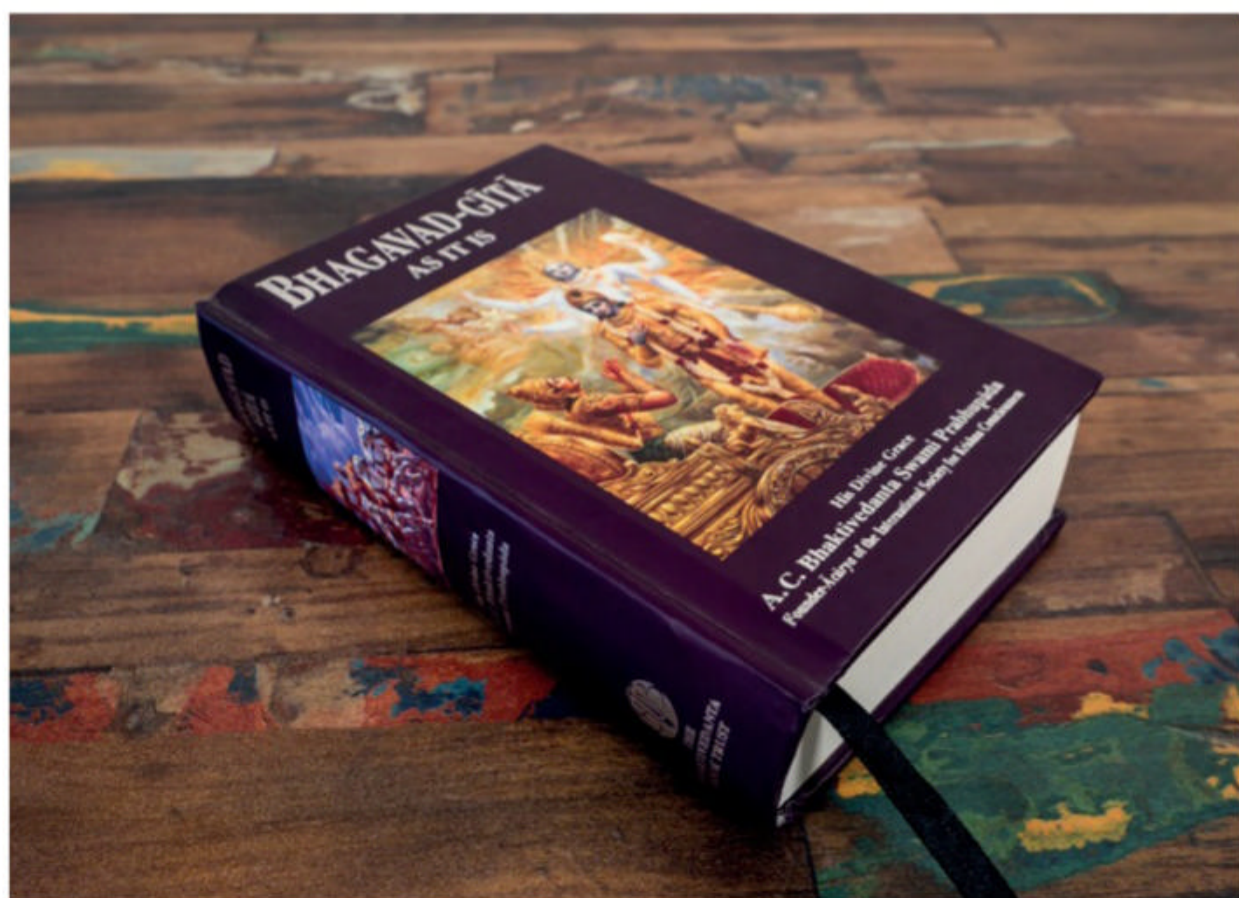
Karma Yoga is the path of action. Often called the Law of Cause and Effect, but it is much more than that. Some questions drawn from the Gita clarify Krishna's message about our outward call to action. For instance, is it in my nature to perform this action? Am I attached to a particular outcome? Is the action right or wrong?

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion, usually in the form of music. The Gita highlights the idea of love as a transformative experience in chapters 7 and 12. Though one's devotion can be faith-based, love is an inhabitable quality of equanimity. Mantras and chanting offer words that sustain such peace.

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga, or 'Royal Path', integrates all four paths. Derived from the Yoga Sutra's Eight Limbs, it is the Yamas, Niyamas, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, and Dhyana.





Yamas can be thought of as outward actions to gain composure as we soldier through life. They are a social gauge to monitor our behaviour and how we conduct ourselves towards others. They are: non-harming, truthfulness, non-stealing, moderation of the senses, and non-possessiveness.

Niyamas: Purity, contentment, self-discipline, self-study and self-surrender are observances or inner practices fostering understanding and knowledge of the self. They reflect the flavour of our thoughts and the way we see ourselves.

Asana is the physical component of yoga. As a modality to warm, stretch, and strengthen the body, asana also prepares the mind to settle and open to the refinements of pranayama.

Pranayama or breath control, are breathing techniques that are the single most effective way to calm the mind and nervous system. The therapeutic benefits of paying attention to the movement of the breath increases mindfulness, reduces stress, and improves sleep.

Pratyahara or sensory withdrawal literally means 'to draw in'. As we use our senses to collect information to form thoughts, pratyahara does not mean tuning out, but consciously directing attention inward rather than on external stimuli. One way to

“The Bhagavad Gita’s classic picture, ‘Krishna’s Chariot’, suggests the battlefield is the struggle of the war within and to drive our chariot intelligently. Holding on to our horses is in itself the soul’s first call to action.”

do this is to become aware of the breath.

Dharana is when the mind leans inward and grows comfortably stable. This effortless concentration refers to watching the breath without tension or distraction.

Dhyana: When the ability to concentrate can be relaxed and held steady, the unbroken flow of concentration is called meditation.

Samadhi is the simple witnessing of our true uninterrupted self.

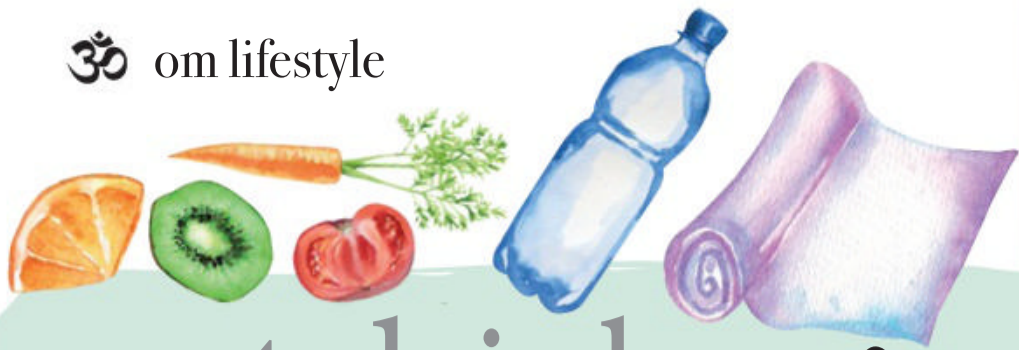
Dharma: Dharma comes from the Sanskrit 'to preserve'. In parts of the Gita, it applies to the laws of the universe, (as above so below) but in context of one's true calling Krishna advises, "It is better to do one's own dharma imperfectly than to succeed in the dharma of another." As the Gita

teaches, preserving our purpose in life and pursuing it with passion is how we thrive.

Although there are many brilliant revelations the Bhagavad Gita marks across a vast internal landscape, it primarily bridges self-awareness with the tools of yoga. Training the senses and aligning our dharma is both grounding and enlightening. The complexities of the Gita are for academics to deconstruct, but not to be eclipsed by the simple backdrop of self-mastery.

The Bhagavad Gita's classic picture 'Krishna's Chariot', suggests the battlefield is the struggle of the war within and to drive our chariot intelligently. Holding on to our horses is in itself the soul's first call to action. ॐ

Marja Wilson is a certified eRYT 500 yoga instructor. Her experience, passion, and sense of humour keeps her approach to teaching yoga and mindfulness light and entertaining. With a background in health science and community nutrition, her studies in India serve to enrich her understanding of the mind-body connection. Since retiring as a performing songwriter (a.k.a. Marge Calhoun), she and her husband, John, live part-time in the USA and Australia.



eat drink *yoga*

Healthy eating goodies



HAPPi Easter Egg Bars

HAPPi has launched a range of delicious oat milk Easter egg bars that are perfect for vegans and all choc lovers, and an alternative to the heavily-packaged traditional eggs that grace our stores each year. Available in three delicious flavours – Plain Milk, Salted Honeycomb and White Raspberry – they boast 35% less sugar than comparable mass market brands, so a great, healthier alternative this Easter too, and use fully recyclable packaging to further help reduce waste. Available online and at Waitrose and Amazon.

£6.49 (140g bar)
happichoc.com

Whole Supp Smart Food

Whole Supp was formulated to help time-poor people stay healthy without compromising on time or spending a fortune. Not designed to replace meals as such, rather to act as a healthier and more nutritious alternative to sugary drinks, bars or even supermarket sandwiches that we often reach for when short of time. Whole Supp provides an easy, real-food meal to help you eat optimally even on the busiest days. It has been formulated to provide a nutritiously-complete meal, with a variety of superfoods: premium fats, proteins, fibres, antioxidants, electrolytes, and prebitioics. Each serving (two scoops) provides 400 calories, 31g plant-based protein, 30 essential vitamins and minerals, and 20% RDI of nutrients. Alternatively, one scoop can be taken as a snack used to refuel before/after exercise.

£29.99 or subscribe and save 10%



Human Nature Plant-Based Snacks

London-based Human Nature Food is launching its award-winning plant-based snacks with Degusta box in the UK as part of its online shop launch this year. The range is made using only nutritious vegan ingredients including peas, red lentils and real jalapenos (its Hot Jalapeño & Lime Lentil Sticks won a Great Taste Award). The snacks contain 13g of protein, are a great source of fibre, and have 40% less fat than regular fried crisps. You'll also be supporting great causes: with every bag sold, Human Nature plants a mangrove tree via its collaboration with Eden Reforestation Project. Each pack is illustrated by world-renowned artist, Bodil Jane, who herself is a keen supporter of social and environmental causes.

£1.49 (or £29.99 for a box of 23 packs incl. UK delivery).
humannaturefood.com



Crosstown Hot Cross Bun Doughnuts

Easter is on its way and so is the return of Crosstown's limited edition vegan Hot Cross Bun Doughnut – Crosstown's spiced vegan dough filled with a deliciously creamy cinnamon custard, topped with Seville orange glaze, and finished with a spiced cross and candied orange peel. Available for delivery across England, Wales and lowland Scotland through to 11 April. The Easter six-pack includes six limited edition Hot Cross Bun doughnuts or three Hot Cross Bun and three Dark Chocolate Truffle doughnuts (£26.95). There's also a twelve-pack, fifteen-pack and Easter selection box available too. Truly scrumptious!

£26.95 (Easter six-pack)
crosstown.co.uk/easter

Love your leeks

British leeks are in season, so here are some delicious recipes to help you make the most of these amazing vegetables

— Leek & Coconut Curry —

SERVES 4

This is a simple, throw-together, comforting dish. The leeks really shine in the sauce and they are just cooked, so they are soft but still hold together.

- 120g (4.2 oz) neutral oil, sunflower or rapeseed are good
 - 50g (1.7 oz) ginger
 - 2 stalks lemongrass, toughest outer layers removed and discarded
 - 5 cloves garlic
 - 3 shallots or 1 small onion, peeled
 - 1 tbsp turmeric powder
 - 2 x 400g (14.1 oz) tins coconut milk
 - 800g (1.7lb) leeks, trimmed weight,
 - Juice of 2 limes
- To serve:**
- Cooked rice
- Garnish**
- Sliced chilli
 - Couple handfuls fresh coriander leaves

1. In a small blender or food processor add in half the oil, ginger, lemongrass, garlic, shallot or onion. Blend to a paste. Then add to a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Cook out the paste for 3-5 minutes until fragrant. Add the turmeric powder and stir for a minute. Follow with the coconut milk. Bring to a simmer.
2. Cut the whites of the leeks into 2cm rounds. Shred the greens finely. Heat the remaining oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Add in the leek greens and cook stirring until they are a light brown colour. Remove to a sieve over a bowl or a plate covered in paper towels to drain excess oil. Season with a pinch of salt.
3. Simmer the sauce for 15-25 minutes until slightly thickened. Then add in the leeks with a good pinch of salt. Return to a simmer until the leeks are tender. 10-15 minutes should suffice. Add the lime juice to your taste and check the seasoning, adjust accordingly.
4. Serve in bowls with rice and the garnish on top.

Recipe from britishleeks.co.uk; recipe, photography & styling by Joe Woodhouse @joe_woodhouse



— Leek & Fava Bean Dip —

This hearty and healthy snack is full of goodness, and it tastes amazing!

- 450g (15.8 oz) fresh or frozen fava beans, shelled, washed, and drained
- 1.8L (4 pints) cold water
- Ice cubes
- Dark green leaves of 1 leek, washed
- 2 tbsp rapeseed oil
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 3 cloves garlic, finely crushed
- 2-3 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2-3 tbsp olive oil

1. Bring water to a boil in a large pot over high heat.
2. Reduce the heat to medium and maintain a steady simmer. Submerge the beans in the hot water and cook, uncovered, for about 5 minutes until tender but still bright green.
3. While the beans are cooking, slice the leek leaves and lightly

sauté in a frying pan with the rapeseed oil for 1 minute. Remove from the pan.

4. Now fill a large mixing bowl with cold water and ice cubes. Once the fava beans are cooked, drain them and plunge them into the ice-water to stop the cooking process and so they retain their lovely green colour.

5. Drain the beans from the ice-water bath and remove the outer skins by gently squeezing each bean with your fingertips; the skin should pop right off. Don't worry if the beans split, as you'll be blending them up anyway.

6. Using a food processor or blender, add the garlic cloves, the cooked beans, and leek leaves and blend until smooth, pausing periodically to scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl to make sure it is all combined.

7. When the beans are smooth add in the lemon juice and season with the remaining salt. Blend again to fully incorporate. With the food processor running, slowly stream in the olive oil until you have a nice and creamy consistency.

8. Transfer the dip to a small serving bowl. Serve with crackers.

Recipe from britishleeks.co.uk; recipe, photography and styling by Julie Cleijne

Leek and Garlic Twist Bread

MAKES: 8-10 SLICES

The perfect weekend bake, this twist bread combines the two tasty flavours of leek and garlic, and is sure to be a hit with everyone!

For the dough:

- 400g (14.1 oz) plain flour
- Fast action yeast
- 210ml (7.1 fl oz) oat milk at room temperature
- 60ml (2 fl oz) olive oil

For the filling:

- 60g (2.1 oz) vegan butter (or margarine)
- 1 large leek
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- Pinch salt

1. Add the warm milk, sugar and yeast into a bowl and leave for around 5 minutes to froth.
2. Add the flour and salt to a large mixing bowl, then once the milk and yeast have reacted, pour those into the mixing bowl with the olive oil and bring together with a spoon or your hands.
3. Move to a floured work surface and knead by hand for 10 minutes. You can also add the dough to a machine and knead for the same amount of time.
4. Clean out the mixing bowl, add a few drops of olive oil, place the

kneaded dough within the bowl, cover and leave in a warm place for around 1 ½ hours.

5. Prepare the filling by finely chopping the leek then beating into the butter. Add the salt, pepper, parsley and garlic powder and mix until combined, then leave aside.

6. After the dough has risen, knock it back and place on a floured surface. Roll the dough out into a rectangle shape around 2-3cm thick.

7. Spread the leek filling onto the surface of the dough leaving just a thin border.

8. Roll the dough up lengthways, to make a long sausage shape, then using a sharp knife carefully slice down the middle (also lengthways) to it should leave you with two long strands.

9. Overlap the two strands, keeping the exposed filling facing towards you (this will help the butter ooze out and bake) then place in a large loaf tin, cover with a tea towel and leave to rise for a further 30 minutes.

10. Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas 5, place the risen dough in for 25 minutes, then cover with baking foil and bake for a further 20-25 minutes.

11. Allow to cool and enjoy!

Recipe from britishleeks.co.uk; created & styled by Lucy Parker @lucy_and_lentils



Save while you cook



Three ways to cut the cost of meal times in the kitchen

No one is happy about the rise in energy costs, and with the prospect of more of the same to come next winter (or worse!) then it's time to get serious about saving money in the kitchen.

The rising price of food in the shops is enough to make anyone shiver these days.

But when you factor in additional costs, including the energy required for heating meals, then it becomes a pretty serious topic, especially for those of us on a tight budget.

But don't shelve those healthy eating plans just yet!

There are still ways you can eat well, honour your beautiful body from within with wholesome, nourishing foods...and still save a few pounds along the way.

1. Salads

Okay, not strictly 'cooking' as such, but super healthy nonetheless! Nothing beats a delicious, healthy salad during the summer months, so now's the time to get creative in the kitchen with all those freshly-harvested goodies. (Bonus points if you can grow your own!) It's

hard to go wrong when it comes to fresh salads, but if you're making the same thing all the time then it could get boring very quickly. Look up some recipes online to mix things up or investigate some new ingredients to throw onto your standard salad plate. If you've never tried kimchi or sauerkraut before, for example, that can add a whole new healthy dimension to your dish that's also great news for your gut.

2. Go raw

Perhaps a bit extreme this one for lots of people, but if you've ever wondered what it's like to 'go raw' then this summer might be the perfect time to give it a try. You'll certainly save any energy costs from using the oven! There are countless people who swear by the raw or near-raw diet, which essentially means you are eating foods as Mother Nature prepared them, not transforming them via cooking over heat in the kitchen. If that sounds a bit dull for those of you with sophisticated tastes, then try visiting a raw food cafe or attend a workshop. It's actually pretty amazing what can be done by clever raw chefs with some simple ingredients.

Organic produce tends to be more expensive, but if you can get your hands on it, then that's even better!

3. Batch cooking

If the raw food diet isn't for you, and you're definitely going to be using that oven, then why not go for it big time and get your cooking done in a day? Batch cooking is a great idea for those who are busy working full-time and want to prepare for the week ahead, or if you're really trying to keep track of what you're putting into your body and want to manage portion sizes carefully. By cooking up multiple meals for the week ahead, whether that's for you or the family, you may be able to save both time and money further down the line.

4. Air fryers

The new kid on the block, air fryers have been much-hyped of late. These small cookers essentially bake food at high temperatures using a high-powered fan. Like other devices such as microwaves, air fryers use significantly less energy than conventional ovens, so in theory they could save you money, although there is the initial outlay to consider



BOILING WATER

Boiling water for one cup of tea in microwave (4 minutes) = 0.05kWh

Boiling water for one cup of tea in electric kettle (2 minutes) = 0.07kWh

Boiling water for one cup of tea in kettle or covered pan on induction hob (2 minutes) = 0.14kWh

Boiling water for one cup of tea in pan on standard electric hob (5 minutes) = 0.18kWh

Source: BBC

first, as well as the type and size of machine that you buy. People love them because they're quick and can be great for cooking food that's often deep-fried, providing some crunch without much oil.

5. Microwaves

Not to everyone's taste, but microwaves deserve a mention as they can heat food very quickly and, it seems, rather economically. They aren't suitable for all types of cooking (and professional chefs might not like the idea at all!) but where they come into their own is in quickly heating simple things like baked beans or soups. According to research, they might even be useful when it comes to making a cup of tea — boiling a mug of water in a microwave has marginal energy-saving benefits compared to using the kettle.

6. One pot wonders


Cooking up a simple veggie stew or casserole for the whole family is a great idea for those on a budget. It can also be a great way to save time as well; ideal



for busy weekdays and family dinners of stews, casseroles, as well as soups and curries. They can also be delicious and just what's needed on a day where the weather wants you to stay inside! Armed with a few root vegetables and pulses, like chickpeas or lentils, the world is your oyster when it comes to cooking up a wonderful one pot wonder that everyone can enjoy.

7. Slow Cookers

Another option for those one pot wonders, slow cookers prepare food over a longer period at lower temperatures...but are they cheaper to run than an oven? Costs can vary depending on the size of the slow cooker, which can range from a compact 1.5 litres suitable for two people up to 7 litres for big families and batch cooking. The average energy cost of a slow cooker annually is £59, compared to

£316 for a conventional oven, according to household energy specialist Utilita. And, according to Direct Energy, a typical electric oven uses between 2,000 to 5,000 watts of energy, which is over 100 times higher than the energy consumption of a slow cooker. Plus, there's the time it takes to pre-heat an oven too and the heat lost every time you open the oven door when switched on. 



GreenPan Slow Cooker

This new GreenPan Slow Cooker benefits from its signature non-toxic, PFAS-free ceramic Thermolon Volt — a diamond-infused ceramic non-stick coating specially designed for the higher heat requirements of electrical appliances. You don't need to add oil to the slow cooker and the ingredients won't stick. Available in Stainless Steel, Glossy Black, Blue Haze and Cloud Cream from John Lewis, Lakeland and selected retailers nationwide.

£199
greenpan.co.uk





Play yoga like a child

What can we learn from children when they practice yoga? **By Victoria Tso**

Do you practice yoga with your family? Or with other children in your life? We can learn so much from practicing with children as they aren't restricted by the 'rules' we tend to follow in our own practice and simply 'play' yoga. They love to shake and bounce, to make new shapes with their bodies, and create exciting partner and group poses. They also enjoy playing with their breath and really feeling into their bodies to notice how they respond. They tune in to their senses during yoga, noticing what they can feel, hear and even smell during practice. They are even playful during their relaxation, with visualisations or tuning in to the soundscape around them.

Are you ever just playful in your practice? I'd recommend giving it a try, you might be surprised how good it makes you feel!

Does your self-practice often follow the same pattern? There is, without doubt, something comforting in allowing your muscle memory to take over as you flow between poses, but try channelling your inner child and feel what each part of your body needs next. My training was

We can learn so much from practicing with children as they aren't restricted by the 'rules' we tend to follow in our own practice and simply 'play' yoga.

in classical Hatha yoga so my practice tends to begin with sun salutations, standing poses and then moves closer to the ground. When I work with children, however, we mix up our poses much more often. We play games or just do the

poses which feel best for our bodies in the moment. If we feel a bit tired after a challenging pose, we enjoy a lion or woodchopper breath to get our energy up — there's no need to always save pranayama for the end of practice!

Of course, the easiest way to take inspiration from a child is to practice with one. I have the privilege of teaching children yoga every day so here are five lessons I have learned from the children I teach:

1. Chanting, singing and humming are really good fun...and it's actually fine to talk during yoga

These are often elements which get dropped from our regular yoga practice but they are incredibly powerful. Children love to chant, to sing, or to simply hum out their breath and when we join them we can reap those benefits too. Make an effort to include some chanting the next time



you meet your mat and feel your throat chakra respond. Children also talk during practice, something very rarely done in adult yoga. There is good reason for this; we are usually turning our focus inwards during practice. But sometimes it's also good to verbalise what we are feeling or how a pose is affecting us.

2. You can hold a pose for as long, or as little, as you want

So many of us are in the habit of holding poses for a certain number of breaths, but children just get into poses and stay for as little or as long as they want to. My four year old will sit in butterfly for ages and

loves to lay in child's pose before bed. If he tries boat pose he will only find stillness for a moment before happily moving on without judgement.

3. Yoga isn't about 'wrong' or 'right', and what your body looks like doesn't matter

I think we all know this one but children really take this seriously. I love watching them work in pairs to support each other's poses and use language like "does it feel better to put your foot further back" rather than telling them their pose is wrong. They make up poses and just enjoy them for how they feel rather than critiquing whether they are 'real poses' and which

lineage they come from. They also don't feel any need to take photos in their most impressive poses, and don't like poses because of how they look, but how they feel. If I ask a group of children to show me their favourite yoga poses they're much more likely to move into child's pose than dancer.

4. If you don't like a pose, you don't have to do it

How many of us put an extra effort on the poses we least like? There is a reason for this: sometimes we are resistant to the poses we need most and certainly poses become easier with practice. Equally though, it's sometimes delicious to just move through our favourite poses; to give ourselves permission to say 'I don't want to do those ones today'. Children are quick to tell me "this doesn't feel good for me today" and I find their intuition and assertiveness inspiring.

5. Props are fun and it's great to use as many as possible

I have been in plenty of adult yoga classes when the teacher offers the use of a block with an adaptation of the pose and yet nobody takes them up on the offer — even if they're struggling. Offer children a prop and they can't wait to get their hands on it. Blocks, steps, singing bowls and breath balls make appearances in all my children's yoga sessions and I really recommend you try using them more often in your practice. I also watch children getting creative with how they use them. They make balance beams from yoga blocks or feel the vibrations of the singing bowl on different parts of their bodies. There are some amazing props about so trying a new one is a great way to mix things up and make your practice more playful.

So what conclusions can we draw from all this? The sequences of our practice are deeply rooted in traditions and ancient knowledge which I certainly don't question. However, once in a while, just 'playing' at yoga and not taking it too seriously will be good for us all. ॐ

Victoria Tso is a specialist children's yoga teacher and experienced classroom teacher. She creates resources for parents and teachers to help them share yoga safely with the children in their life. Enjoyed this little infusion of yoga? Find a free bedtime yoga series for kids on her website: innerchildyogaschool.com or connect on Instagram @inner_child_yoga_school



TEACHER ZONE

TEACHER ZONE

A deeper understanding of yoga... for teachers, by teachers

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Your Practice: After
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MyYogaBiz

Tips from the experts to help you grow the yoga business of your dreams

THIS MONTH'S MENTOR:

Debbie Copner, 53, The Curly Yogi, Telford, Shropshire (thecurlyyogi.co.uk)

Does a YTT set you up for running your own business?

I never thought I would have my own little business. In fact, I never thought I would achieve my dream of being a yoga teacher due to a lifelong phobia of public speaking. The transition from office job to teaching yoga was a huge challenge! My YTT was brilliant and we did cover a little of the business side, but what it didn't prepare me for was the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes...the admin, marketing, emails, website and social media feels like a never ending to-do list some days!

Business plan?

A friend once said to me: "If a door doesn't open, it's not your door". So I don't follow a business plan, I just flow to wherever the universe takes me. For instance, I did pregnancy yoga training when my daughter was pregnant so that she could continue to come to my classes and baby yoga training so I could share my love of yoga with my baby granddaughter. This would never have been in a business plan...but they are now my favourite and most popular classes!

Marketing tips?

I often ask students what type of classes, workshops or retreats they'd like. I feel uncomfortable 'selling' but it feels easier when it's the result of a conversation and something I know my students would like to do. Canva is great software for making ads. I always use photos I have taken or photos of me, try to write in my own voice and let my humour come through, that way the marketing feels more natural to me and less 'salesy'.

Social media?

I use Facebook and Instagram but rarely plan content. I just post about things we have talked about or practiced in class. I love interacting with clients and other teachers; sometimes a comment can open a whole conversation. I don't follow trends on social media and some weeks I don't post at all — at times, I'm burying my head in the sand at the thought of making an Instagram reel! My advice



Photos: Florence Fox Commercial (commercial.florencefox.com)

would be not to overthink it. Your posts don't have to be perfect, picturesque or eloquent. I suppose that mirrors my classes really!

Your niche?

I teach the type of yoga that I've always loved to do. I'm a great believer in adapting the pose to suit your body. Yoga doesn't have to be perfect, it just needs to feel good. I like to add humour to classes and you will more likely find me quoting Dolly Parton than Patanjali.

I suppose my niche is women's yoga: pregnancy, postnatal and menopause. There is something special about connections made in a women's circle. Some of my pregnancy yoga students have made amazing friendships in class which have continued into baby yoga and beyond, and I'm extremely proud of that.

Hardest lesson?

The hardest lesson was finding out that teaching yoga and practicing yoga are two completely different things. Teaching can be physically and mentally challenging and consequently I find my personal practice is nowhere near as regular as it was. My body receives from some of the physical benefits when I teach a class, but I really miss the spiritual benefits of my own regular practice. Luckily, I have some lovely yoga teacher friends and I know I can join their classes at those times when I need to simply be a yogi enjoying being led in a really great practice. 🧘‍♀️

Written and compiled by Claudia Brown (yogabyclaudia.com)

Reconnecting to your yoga practice... *after a pandemic*

Millions worldwide experienced feelings of isolation and disconnection in the wake of the dreaded lockdowns. Here, Simone Scott shares her story of how she rediscovered her love for her yoga practice and teaching, and shares tips on how you can reconnect too

Simone Scott and Jennifer Hoessler



Disconnected

I'd been feeling somewhat disconnected from yoga – both my own practice and my teaching – and perhaps more worryingly, from my own body in general, for some time. In the post-pandemic world this accelerated into overdrive, leaving me feeling stuck in my own head and seemingly unable to get out. I was fighting with myself to find solutions which only served to exacerbate the situation; adding an unhelpful layer of frustration and self-flagellation at my self-perceived inability to manage something that I felt 'should' be simple.

Reflecting on this, my lack of self-compassion feels so unkind, though that's a great realisation in itself. Yet things had been so different; whilst I sorely missed the real-life richness of in-person teaching and practicing that was swiftly taken away during the pandemic, I did enjoy having this time and space to immerse, explore and play – experiencing new practices and connecting in different ways. I particularly remember one online yin session with Ilse Sobering from House of Inner Power Yoga (@houseofinnerpower) where I joined a group of grateful others, practicing in true harmony: 90 minutes passing in a flash and feeling genuinely sad when it ended as I felt so in tune with my own body and mind, and truly connected with every other person in the 'room'.

You're not alone

Whilst many waxed lyrically about their post-pandemic positive realisations and life changes – inspiring stories of turning

new-found or re-discovered talents into careers and abandoning previous and less-enriching ways of living – concerning anecdotes from others with similar experiences to mine would occasionally, almost apologetically, rise above the blur of opportunity-grabbing ‘good news’ accounts that only served to make me feel guilty, useless and unworthy.

So whilst offering an opportunity for positive change for many, the effects of those pandemic years left others emerging into their new worlds feeling physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally disconnected.

Basti Hausch, a marketing director and yoga teacher from Frankfurt, Germany (@baha_yoga), talks of his experience, which began when he noticed friends in his yoga community becoming self-professed ‘professionals in medicine’ with strong, and often unhelpful views on the virus. “This gave me a weird taste of some of the people I’d learned from and so I stopped teaching yoga and stepped out of that world,” he says.

A slow return to resuming classes as a student was short-lived, with Hausch contracting the virus during what he’d hoped to be a heavily yoga-influenced holiday to Bali, leaving him unwell for weeks. The situation snowballed on his return, as he admitted he “became lazy”, and unable to muster the motivation to return, having lost the routine that had previously been the source of so much joy. “I felt low. I felt that my physical body and soul were no longer aligned. Every movement, every decision, almost everything I tried to do felt exhausting.”

Hard to hear, though words that may resonate with so many: focus turned inwards, connection with others and the outer world withdrawn, joy on hold.

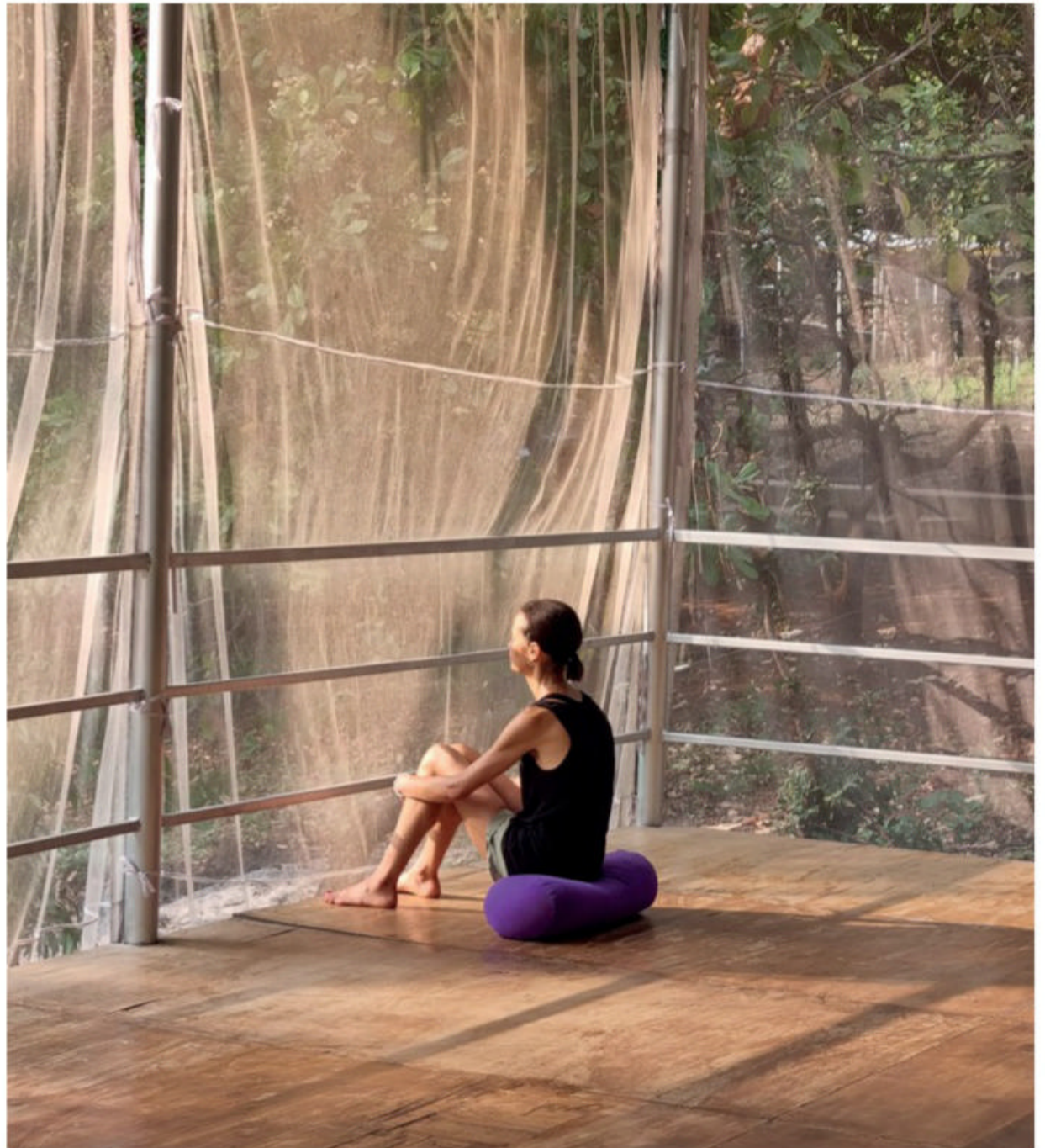
Positive steps

Whilst it took time to process the experiences, it became clear that I was burnt out. But my resolve to reconnect with myself thankfully remained. I felt a need to completely immerse myself in yoga again, and with fond memories of just how much I’d enjoyed my previous experiences of teacher training I decided to repeat the experience, signing up to the 300 hour vinyasa flow training at Sampoorna Yoga in India (@sampoorna_yoga).

Despite already being an experienced and 500-plus hours qualified teacher, I granted myself ‘permission’ to approach the experience through the eyes of a beginner. Whilst I counted my blessings at being in the fortunate position to be able to do so, I felt I owed this to myself and to those I count myself lucky to teach.

Accepting where you are

Noticing the situation and acknowledging where you are is the



first step. Yet the realisation may take time, which may be due to a lack of awareness or even feeling scared and trying to battle on.

Edinburgh-based solution-focused psychotherapist and author Gin Lalli (ginlalli.com) has helped many clients overcome similar experiences, seeing a sharp increase in cases resulting from the damaging effects of the post-pandemic emergence. Describing this as the ‘freeze’ response, in which the primitive brain seeks to protect by withdrawing until the perceived danger (and the pandemic was most certainly a huge red flag to that part of the brain) has passed.

With her clients, this freeze manifested as dissociation and disconnection – disconnection with passions and interests that once provided such joy, with those with whom they would usually have enjoyed interactions, and also with their own bodies.

“Whilst it took time to process the experiences, it became clear that I was burnt out. But my resolve to reconnect with myself thankfully remained.”

“Whilst the intellectual brain knows these things can bring joy, the primitive brain takes over, catastrophising that everything will be a disaster – and why would it let you do that? By dissociating, it separates you from that,” she says.

For Basti Hausch, the realisation came following a very honest

chat with his partner who had become increasingly concerned at his disconnection: “He tried to motivate me for some time, but the more he tried, the less I did.” That said, his partner’s words and the clear anguish this was causing for his partner were enough for him to accept the situation; offering that ‘penny drop’ moment that something wasn’t right and that he was ready to start the journey of reconnection. Like me, Basti Hausch also chose Sampoorna to take those tentative first steps.

Coming out of the other side

While some may be lucky and see rapid changes, recognising that reconnecting is unlikely to be a linear process is key. With time and patience there should be chinks of light and penny drop moments where realisations are made, and it’s important to catch, savour and celebrate those moments, no matter how fleeting and small they may seem.

For me, the first came during a morning meditation session – and not during an asana practice as I’d assumed it might – making the experience quite unexpected and perhaps more impactful. Time became insignificant as I felt every sensation in my body; a physical connection with the ground, a visualisation of my heart pulsating, the gentle sound of my breath. Absolute bliss.

The second came later, during a physical practice where I felt as though I was immersed in a beautiful dance, completely lost in the sensations of my own body: a ripple along my spine, a flick of my wrist, a shimmy across my shoulders to ease and glide in ways that felt graceful and gleeful.

Hausch beautifully describes his initial moment of reconnection which occurred at a time when he least expected it during his own Sampoorna quest: “I walked to my room after a class and suddenly noticed how nice it felt to walk. To feel my legs moving, one step after another. I was in the moment – not somewhere else.” This has, thankfully, continued and he now feels ready to return: “I want to teach again and share what yoga has helped me with in terms of emotional stability and physical fitness.”

Seeds of hope

As a professional, Gin Lalli encourages those she works with to start with small steps and, using the example of resuming a yoga practice, says: “Don’t try to start with an hour, set yourself the goal of five minutes and that’s it. If you manage five minutes – that’s fantastic! In my work we make a big deal of the small things. Celebrate the small things and they will become something bigger.” Words of reassuring comfort that should help to plant some small and realistic seeds of hope.



Basti Hausch

“I walked to my room after a class and suddenly noticed how nice it felt to walk. To feel my legs moving, one step after another. I was in the moment – not somewhere else.”

Jennifer Hoessler, a sports and gymnastic teacher, sports actor, and senior yoga teacher at Sampoorna (@jenmirih) was one of the vital pieces in the jigsaw that helped me to begin my journey of reconnection. She speaks of providing her students with the time, space, and non-judgementalism – gently encouraging them to allow the same for themselves – to open the doors to transformation, particularly in the wake of emerging in this new and forever changed world. “As soon as you push, the doors close. Give space, without judgement, and at some point things will start to open up.”

I’ve learned to give myself this time and space, stepping back – without judgement – to check in with myself and to recognise when I’m beginning to disconnect, recognising that inner fight before it escalates into a full-on brawl.

Becoming your own best mate

While it may not come naturally – especially during those difficult early days – pausing to check in and to apply a liberal dose of self-compassion will provide a solid and loving foundation to give the wonderful things you deserve the essential sustenance they need to grow and flourish.

Go gently and take time to explore, observe and play. Immerse yourself in those chinks of lights, celebrate the small wins, and learn lessons – from the positives and the hiccups – that unfold along the way.

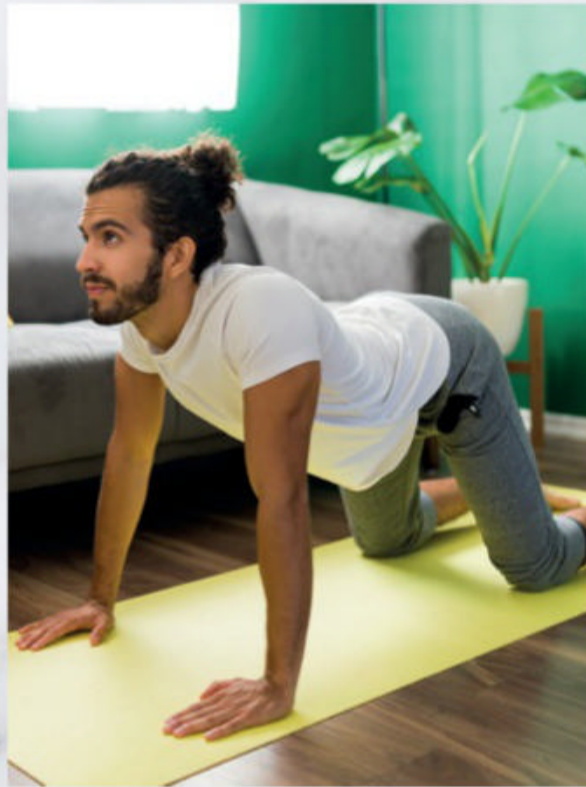
A student recently shared his experience of emerging from his own dark period of disconnection, explaining how he’d learned to be his own ‘best mate’.

So here’s to us all becoming our own best mates: kind, patient, present and connected. Wishing you so much luck and many a small win on your journey. 🙏

Simone Scott is a yoga teacher and writer. Follow her journey @simsspace

3 TOOLS FOR RECONNECTING

The following are a few simple tools from the box I've developed to continue my journey of discovery. These are tools I can choose to introduce into my day, without judgement and with kindness, and acceptance that there will often be times when it's just not possible. And that's absolutely okay.



1. A SIMPLE BELLY BREATH

Something I do before rushing into the 'must dos' of the day, whether that's working, washing or weeding, but can be done at any time. Set a timer – even just for five minutes – to sit and simply breathe. No need for any special pranayama techniques here, only to allow yourself the time to fully immerse in the moment.

- Find a comfortable position, whether perched on the edge of your bed, on the floor, on a chair, even in a loo cubicle at work – though somewhere where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes.
- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your heart.
- Direct your breath into your hands, feeling the expansion as you inhale and contraction as you exhale.
- Visualise yourself grounding into your space with the lower body relaxing and releasing whilst the upper body becomes free to expand and lengthen.

Your mind will inevitably wander, so, like gently calling back a wandering puppy, bring your attention back to your hands, reminding yourself this is just five minutes which you deserve to help

sow those seeds of hope for a better day.

2. SLOW, MINDFUL MOVEMENT

While you may feel you 'have' to squeeze in a full asana practice, try the 'small win' celebration technique with a mini session of movement. No need for any special kit – I'm often doing this one in my pyjamas, either upon waking or when I'm winding down for bed. A couple to try:

- Start with a few cat cows, before gently stepping forward to a heart-opening low lunge, extending your front leg out to an easy half split. End the sequence by slowly lowering down in to a relaxed pigeon pose. Repeat on the other side.
- A super slow sun salutation of your choice. Move slowly and mindfully throughout, checking in to notice the sensations you feel along the way. How does your breath feel? What's happening in your body?

Whilst not every practice will feel like a cause for celebration, I'm increasingly beginning to move with joy, wonder, appreciation and, most importantly for me, connection. I'm allowing myself the time and space to move with freedom

and without the constraints of what the movement or asana 'should' look like. Cool air passing through my nostrils, a gentle wriggle here, a shoulder shimmy there, a silky stretch along my hamstring, a ripple along my spine.

Whatever your sensations, take time to connect, granting yourself the permission to celebrate each and every part of your amazing body.

3. SMILING

The final tool I've introduced during both of the above – and that's been something of a game-changer for me – is to smile. Whilst this may sound a little cheesy, research has shown that simply smiling – whether as a genuine emotional response or a purely physical expression – sends a message to the brain, releasing hormones that can positively affect mood. Smiling also relaxes the muscles on the face, easing away tensions and tightness that accumulate as a result of furrowed brows and clenched jaws. So whilst it's not always the easiest thing to do, especially in times of great difficulty, it's a small step that is certainly worth a try.

TIME TO RECONNECT

Have you experienced a similar story and struggled to reconnect to your practice, your body, or even to life, in the wake of the lockdown era? Share your insights and experiences with OM readers. Email: editor@ommagazine.com



“Rest is essential, not just for our individual selves, but also for each other, for our collective wellbeing. When you’re rested, it’s good for everyone around you. Imagine how different the world would be if we were all well-rested.”

The power of rest

Rest for others as well as yourself. By Paula Hines

I’m feeling a little reflective writing this, as it’s one year since my book, *Rest + Calm* was published.

Rest seems to be having its moment, a bit like ‘self-care’ before it, being presented to us as something fluffy or frivolous (of which it’s neither). But rest is not a trend.

There are lots of ways to rest. With my book, my deep wish was to be able to share elements of the practice, which continues to teach me so much about myself (and Self) and life, with a greater number of people than I can reach in my classes and workshops. *Rest + Calm* is grounded in restorative yoga, which I’ve now taught for over a decade and also includes other calming practices and tips for day-to-day intentional living.

Why restorative yoga? Because it’s the practice I needed the most. It took me years to realise I’d inherited my mother’s guilt of resting. Growing up, this guilt was something I witnessed in her peers. (I don’t think it’s a coincidence that they had all migrated to this country from elsewhere to build new lives.)

Long-time readers of this column will know about my year of daily savasana from 2014 to 2015 (The 365 Savasana Project), which was born out of exhaustion. I wish I could say it was the first time I’d experienced burnout, but I’d been there before in

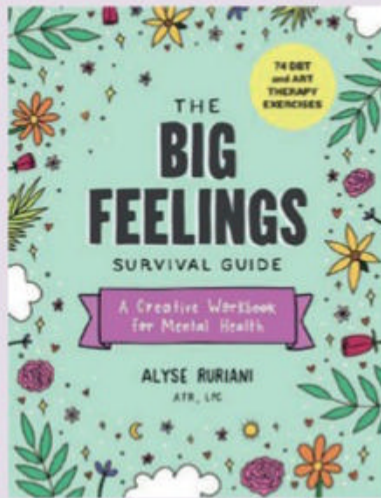
my old career working in television. Though I enjoyed my job, the demands, workload and erratic, long hours took their toll eventually. And I wasn’t alone in this among colleagues – it was a by-product of the culture at the time.

By 2014, I’d been teaching yoga for a few years and, as I hadn’t learned the lesson, it came back around again. I was happy to give to others what I appeared to be unwilling to give myself. Of course, I ended up depleted and in a position where I was no longer able to give even a fraction of my best to anyone, let alone myself.

Physical rest is one of the types of rest we all need. If restorative yoga isn’t for you, please find what is.

As I wrote in *Rest + Calm*: “Rest is essential, not just for our individual selves, but also for each other – for our collective wellbeing... When you’re rested, it’s good for everyone around you. Imagine how different the world would be if we were all well-rested.” 🙏

*Paula Hines is a London-based yoga teacher and writer. Her book *Rest + Calm* (Green Tree, Bloomsbury Publishing) is out now in paperback, audiobook and Kindle/eBook. Find out more at: ucanyoga.co.uk*



The Big Feelings Survival Guide: A Creative Workbook For Mental Health

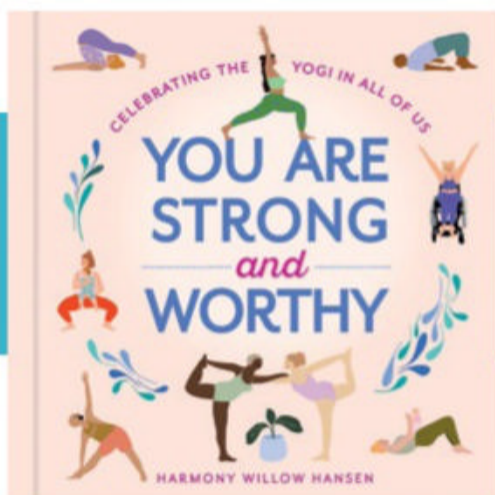
Alyse Ruriani

£12.99

Workman Publishing

This book is a series of creative prompts based in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) — developed in the 1980s for those who struggled with emotional dysregulation with the aim of helping people find ‘a life worth living’. It’s a fun, accessible book that is grounded in clinical theory, yet can be applied to everyday life. It’s also highly practical and includes 74 DBT and art therapy exercises ideal for anyone interested in bettering their mental health.

FURTHER READING



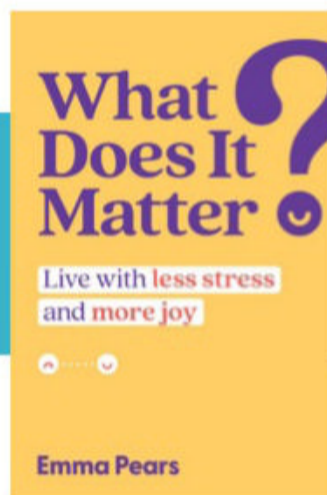
You Are Strong And Worthy: Celebrating The Yogi In All Of Us

Harmony Willow Hansen

£13.99

Workman Publishing

Modern images of yoga have long featured the same kinds of bodies: white, slim, young, able. Harmony Willow Hansen has been drawing people in yoga practice for years, creating a presence on Instagram that reaches thousands. Her figures include older people, trans people, differently-abled people, people in different body types and weights. This book shares her illustrations of these yogis in an array of positions from beginner to advanced.



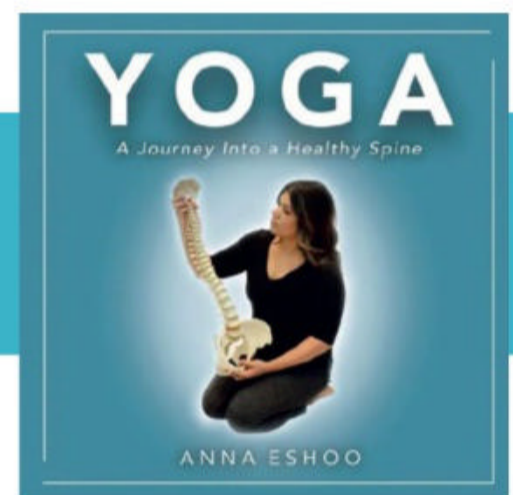
What Does It Matter? Live With Less Stress And More Joy

Emma Pears

£20

Post Hill Press

Unpack the power of asking, “What does it matter?” to quell anxiety and cut stress. In this book, the author shares what she has found helpful in her life and offers it to the reader to use how they want to. This is crucial, because the best lesson is to remember to think before you follow; to think before you overreact; to think before being hard on yourself. Remember to ask, “What does it matter?” to help you see a lighter side in any situation sooner.



Yoga: A Journey Into A Healthy Spine

Anna Eshoo

£45

Balboa Press

Anna Eshoo, a yoga instructor in the USA, once suffered from a debilitating back injury that required multiple surgeries. After hours of research and conversations with doctors, she found yoga therapy to be a safe and effective method to strengthen the lumbar spine and core muscles. This book is the result of copious amounts of information from the world of medicine and the knowledge she already had from practicing yoga for many years.

How yoga *saved me* during my cancer fight

Yoga, meditation and prayer kept Leigh Fernandez grounded, positive and hopeful during her fight to be cancer-free. Here, the yoga instructor, based in Tenerife, tells her remarkable story in her own words

You awaken to a sluggish, heavy, drug-fused mind; your body heavy and your heart beating at pace. Then you remember: you remember what you wish you'd forgotten and never had to endure. But it's happened. You've been diagnosed with breast cancer — and you are doing everything in your power to rid the body of the 'Beasty'!

Here, I'd like to share with you my own personal story of hope, from the past year or so, on a journey that has turned me into a 'Beasty Slayer' — with yoga on my side the whole way!

My life changed forever on 14 April 2022 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Within four short weeks from that date, my life and outward appearance had changed dramatically.

But now, a year on, thanks to the power of my yoga, my inner strength has doubled, tripled, quadrupled beyond my wildest dreams. My yoga life and my spiritual beliefs have been my saviour and support to free my mind, rid my body of this beastly and get my little body fully firing once more, fully functioning, and free of cancer. Yoga has given me this, and the miracle of hope...and you can have this too!

Dark days of diagnosis

Statistics show that now one in two of us will be diagnosed at some stage in our life with cancer. It is an illness that has zero discrimination. It can affect anyone at anytime.

On a trip then to Tenerife, where I was working on my 2022 yoga retreat planning, I

discovered some discomfort, inflammation and a rapid (what seemed like overnight) change. I consulted my doctor the day I returned. Scans, mammograms, biopsies, and other tests all followed... my life felt like it was on 'speed' for the next few weeks! Then the chemo started...

I want to share with you that you can have a happy and good quality of life while going through your cancer treatment using yoga and fitness as your daily anchor. Yes, you will have ups and downs. However, there are people, resources and communities just waiting to support you.

When my consultant gave me my diagnosis I was in total disbelief. I was in great health, or so I thought, having embarked on a full body and mind transformation in 2020. I was feeling so full of life, happy and healthy, excited for my forthcoming yoga retreats in Tenerife. It turns out that I was diagnosed with a genetic inherited cancer, which could have surfaced at any time in my life, with no given notice. Why now?

Thank goodness I acted on my feelings. If you feel any inner intuition that something is wrong, do not take 'no' for an answer, ask your GP for a second, third, or fourth opinion until you are satisfied with the outcome. In my case, I had a large, square tumour growing fast in my left breast.

Praying for a healthy life

What happened next seemed to all move so fast. There was no time to ponder or dwell on anything. My breast consultant,

radiographer doctor and oncology consultant had my plan set for me within days. From onset of diagnosis to getting my first operation felt like minutes!

Yes, it was scary. But this treatment and intervention was going to save my life. I embraced it and everything that was thrown at me.

All the while, I prayed for life. This was all I wanted, so I prayed for it; I prayed for my healthy quality of life to come back.

On 4 May, 2022 my first cycle of chemotherapy went in. This was literally just over two weeks from initially stepping into my doctor's surgery. It was one of the scariest days of my life.

Chemotherapy lasted for over six months. It is extremely hard on your body and your mental state. But having my yoga practice during this time gave me structure, gave me routine and kept my mind active.





Rest. Relax. Rejuvenate.

Strong, contented and cancer-free

Fast forward almost a year and today I feel an incredible contentment within. On Day 183, I got the news I had been praying for. I had a full pathological response to the chemotherapy treatment and my first operation made sure I was cancer-free. My surgeon said to me: "Your solid, no nonsense, direct approach and dedication to your yoga life, with such a focused mindset, has got you through this, Leigh." He was so proud of me and I was so happy with his news and support throughout.

Both during the treatment, and now, my focus and routine includes daily meditation, yoga nidra, yoga stretching, as well as resting and relaxation when required. I am allowing my body, cells and tissues to regenerate.

I find being wholly present, and embracing an internal contentment, allows me to remain fully in the present moment. And never have I had to be more present than now; to be content, in where I am, and in what I can achieve, both in mind and body.

Today, my mind is strong, but my body is weaker. Yet I am getting stronger day by day.

My daily meditation practice

Meditation and being mindful are my anchors. Mindfulness is simply the art of being present and just 'being'.

Embracing my daily meditation practice truly grounds me and keeps my mind clear and gives me valuable perspective. Being present is essential during a time like this; there is no running away from things, or getting ahead and moving into the unknown...or looking back at what could have been.

The miracle of yoga nidra

Yoga nidra is my cushion. When sleep is lacking, or not coming easily, using my yoga nidra practice to get a few extra hours of relaxed, conscious sleep is a delightful and extremely valuable practice. It is a mindful and meditative practice that helps us quiet the mind and to 'just be'. Today, I love both teaching and practicing yoga nidra.

Yoga nidra means 'yoga sleep', a powerful technique in which you learn to relax consciously. During yoga nidra, sleep is not regarded as relaxation. For true and absolute relaxation, you must remain aware. This is yoga nidra, the state of dynamic sleep.

We work through our brain waves to a Theta state, the intriguing border between the conscious and the subconscious. By learning to work with our Theta state,

we can access and more effectively influence the powerful subconscious part of our brain (normally inaccessible to our waking mind). In a Theta state, we tap into the creative and intuitive place of the mind, bringing us true relaxation and energisation to both body and mind.

Stretching for strength

During my treatment, I would focus on four simple yoga exercises to get my body moving daily. This is one flowing movement I would practice regularly: Standing in mountain pose, slowly moving into a gentle forward fold, into a nice spinal stretch, into Hindu squat, onto my knees into camel pose, onto all fours for cat & cow as optional spinal flexibility, then back up into a tall, standing mountain pose.

Happiness, health...and hope

We all get a raw deal at times in life, but if you embrace the deal full on and can see this as some kind of gift to accept and act on it in the most positive and productive, actionable way, you will see the tide turn. Your personal healthcare is your magic potion.

My cancer-free journey continues as I wait to have several further operations. For now, I focus on the gift that is my yoga life, creating and sustaining my healthy body using my daily meditation, yoga nidra and daily yoga stretch to keep my mind and body strong, and remain grounded in my spiritual life.

The remainder of this year is very much focused on resetting my body clock, but in 2024, I will be looking to relaunch my yoga classes, fitness coaching and yoga retreats. Watch this space! 🧘

YOGA NIDRA BENEFITS

Here are some of the amazing benefits of yoga nidra:

- gives you the feeling of being well-rested
- improves your overall health
- a powerful agent for reducing stress
- induces a more restful sleep
- boosts the immune system
- can help prevent illness
- promotes healing
- can slow premature ageing
- helps cells regenerate and repair
- helps decrease anxiety
- can improve your overall mood

Leigh Fernandez is a holistic coach, yoga and mindset teacher and personal trainer who is embracing and fully enjoying this ride called life. Find her on Instagram @ladyleighfitness



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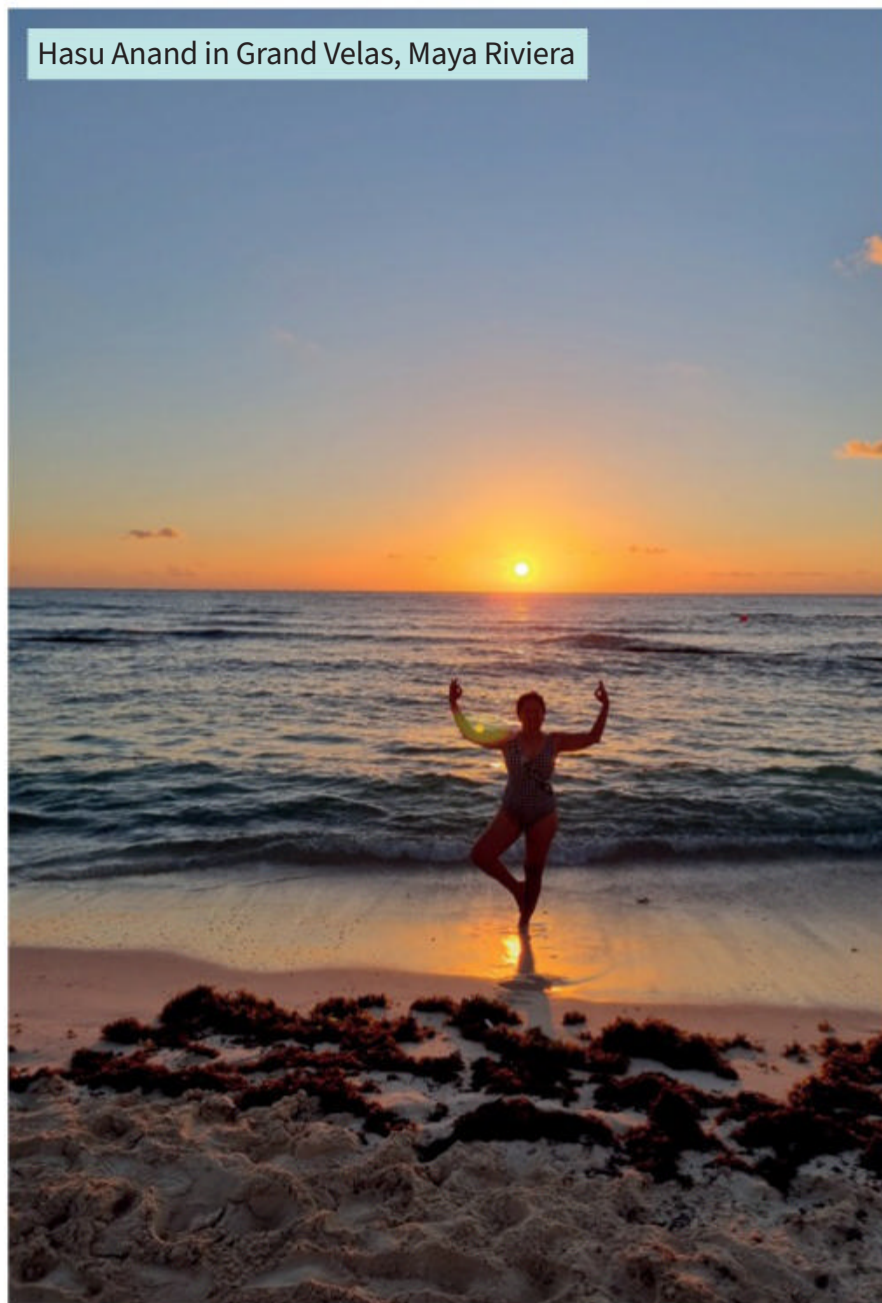
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Yoga is for every body

Your pictures. Your community

Hasu Anand in Grand Velas, Maya Riviera



Buffy and Shirley, Livingston Village



Unique Figueroa in New York



Mary Jones enjoying mindful macrame at retreat day in Cambridgeshire



Lorna Fisher - Design Museum London



Maysun Hassanaly

We want your photos!

Send us happy shots, fun pics, great asana (or bad asana!), big smiley faces, anything at all – and see them in OM Magazine. It doesn't have to be you doing a yoga pose either. We want to see your yoga life: a pre-class group hug, a cup of tea after class, what you got up to at the weekend, send them all via email to: jane@primeimpact.co.uk



The ‘sexy’ side of yoga

Sex sells but is it an appropriate vessel for the expansion of yoga? By Sarah Highfield

Looking at a large portion of yoga media, whether that be mainstream or social media, the photos and videos which receive the most attention repeatedly feature yogis in the least amount of clothes.

Undoubtedly, this style of imagery can be misinterpreted, construed in the wrong way, or seen as upfront ‘sexy.’ That said, let us not forget that there is a style of yoga, Tantra yoga, which has its roots in sexual rites and practices.

Yet, while the longstanding relationship between yoga and sex is historically documented, in modern times and in our current digital age is the broader essence of yoga being lost by the onslaught of ‘sexy’ yoga photos and videos online?

Disturbingly, there are social media pages which endeavour to post the most suggestive yoga poses performed by ‘yogis’ in yoga outfits which are practically see-through. These types of pages, I feel, cross a line somewhere, and they can appear somewhat degrading and reductive.

On a lesser degree, and more in general, why does yoga need to be ‘sexy?’ Is it simply to attract more students and fuel global growth? Unsurprisingly, as a commodity, the ‘image’ of yoga plays a key role in its marketability and increased visibility to a certain

market of people — the masses. Though, of course, every student is motivated to do yoga for a different reason, and many won’t be swayed so easily. Thankfully, on balance, there is also a market for more humble, unassuming, and accessible yoga.

My opinion is that ‘sexy’ photos are not the problem, but the implications that yoga should be ‘sexy’ is rather confusing, and, for sure, can feel exclusionary. Ultimately, anyone who is serious about yoga should be able to see the wood from the trees and recognise the intention behind a photo or a video; and understand the difference between something which has substance and something which does not. One approach is holistic and unaffected, and the other is showy and ostentatious.

On that note, I say “you do you,” and in this age of mental health awareness, we should focus on lifting one another up, rather than criticising. Moreover, for anyone struggling to reconcile with this idea, this is yet another good opportunity to practice non-judgement; take what works and leave the rest behind (really far behind!). ॐ

Sarah Highfield is a yoga teacher, three-time OM cover model and regular contributor. Visit: yogagise.com or connect on Instagram @Yogagise

Photo by Sophie Harbinson (@sharbinson)/Alexandra Palace (@yourallypally)

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