Welcome to the San Francisco Conference

Mission Center
City College of San Francisco
1125 Valencia St.
San Francisco, California 94110

Oct 6-8 2017

Integral Yoga Institute
San Francisco

Offerings

- Daily Yoga Classes
- Teacher Trainings 200 & 500 hour
- Workshops
- Yoga Therapy Clinic
- Satsang (every other Saturday)
- Kirtan (every other Saturday)
- Free Meditation
- Vegetarian Lunches
- Yoga Philosophy

Your first class is FREE!
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www.integralyogasf.org
770 Dolores Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
415.821.1117

Integral Yoga Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the community through living and sharing the classical teachings of yoga. Anyone, from any background, any age, any capacity, can come practice in community with others, find peace within themselves, and bring that peace and that light into their lives.
Mission Statement

Accessible Yoga is dedicated to sharing the benefits of Yoga with anyone who currently does not have access to these practices, and with communities that have been excluded or under-served. All people, regardless of ability or background, deserve equal access to the ancient practices of Yoga, which offer individual empowerment and spiritual awakening. By building a strong network and advocating for a diverse Yoga culture that is inclusive and welcoming, we are sharing Yoga with all.

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Dear Accessible Yogis,

Welcome to the first Accessible Yoga Conference in San Francisco. This is our fourth time coming together in an effort to connect and build a strong Accessible Yoga community. It is such an exciting time for Accessible Yoga. We are growing quickly as more and more people join this revolution of love and service.

Part of that growth includes a new Board of Directors. The members of the Board are Swami Ramananda, Dianne Bondy, Cheri Clampett, Steffany Moonaz, Priya Wagner, Sarani Fedman, Rudra Swartz, and myself. I am grateful to each of them for their support. They are working tirelessly, along with our staff and volunteers, to support you in your efforts to make yoga available to anyone who has an interest in learning about these powerful and transformative practices.

People always ask me what Accessible Yoga is, so here is a short definition we put together: Accessible yoga is an approach to teaching based on the ideals of inclusivity, diversity and accessibility rather than a particular style of yoga. These concepts define Accessible Yoga:

- Each individual is a unique and equal expression of our essential oneness
- Everyone has a right to the teachings and practices of yoga
- Service and compassion are yoga in action
- Teaching yoga is a collaborative, collective and creative process
- Personal growth and transformation require a supportive community

Also, we’re happy to welcome Yoga Alliance as a new sponsor. We’re looking forward to collaborating with them to build a more inclusive and accessible yoga community. Our position is that all yoga teachers should receive training to make their classes accessible. Teachers need to learn how to make their classes welcoming, supportive and safe for every person who walks into their classroom.

Our goal is not simply stating that yoga is for everyone. We are involved in supporting teachers to gain the skills necessary to offer appropriate practices for all students. We continue to advocate for appropriate, inclusive and accessible yoga for all and to welcome new partners to join us in our efforts.

A big thank you to City College of San Francisco for hosting us! Thank you also to our San Francisco team for their tireless efforts in making this Conference a reality. In particular, I want to thank Muktidevi Demafeliz, our fearless leader, Judy Mirabai Hubbell, Sarani Fedman, Priya Wagner, Chris Trost, Jackie Barshak, Sevika Ford, Jswari Spoon, Prashanti Goodell, and all our other volunteers. A special thank you to Hannah Callaway for her generous loan of props, as well as to the San Francisco Integral Yoga Institute for all of their support.

And thank you for your ongoing support, and for all you do to make yoga accessible. Please use this opportunity to make connections, build networks, and reconnect with yourself.

Om,

Jivana Heyman, Director
Advisory Committee
Dianne Bondy
Matthew Sanford
Nischala Joy Devi
Cheri Clampett
Swami Ramananda
Sonia Sumar

Planning Committee
Overssees all of Accessible Yoga’s activities – this committee is made up of experienced Accessible Yoga teachers who are committed to sharing yoga with all, and expanding the Accessible Yoga movement. We are focused on service and empowerment, including our dedication to having people with disabilities in leadership roles within the organization.

Jivana Heyman – Director
Megan Zander - Operations Director
Brina Lord – Operations Manager
Paula Andrea Narvaez - Volunteer Coordinator
Sarah Helt – Communications Director
Priya Wagner
Ana Killingstat
Rudra Swartz
Shakti Bell
Sarani Fedman
Accessible Yoga Teams

The Accessible Yoga teams came out of our 1st conference in 2015 when so many people came forward to get involved in this movement. We now have 9 teams of Yogis working on all aspects of Accessible Yoga — we couldn’t do it without them! The teams are working on organizing the Conferences, as well as our other activities — such as our social media awareness campaigns and other activities around the world. If you want to get involved, please email us at info@accessibleyoga.org.

Logistics

NYC Logistics – NYC@accessibleyoga.org
Rudra Swartz – team leader, Hamza Spagnola, Anjali Somas, Siobhan H. Turcincovic, Brina Lord, Rebecca Maclenzie

San Francisco Logistics – Logistics@accessibleyoga.org
Mukti Devi Demafeiiz – team leader, Mirabai Hubbell, Sarah Stedman, Priya Wagner, Chris Trst, Jackie Barshak, Ken Scarberry

European Logistics – Europe@accessibleyoga.org
Priya Pernilla Halden – co-leader, Alessandra Uma Cocchi – co-leader, Katja Sandschneider, Heather Sheridan

The mission of our Logistics Teams is to support the planning and organization of the Accessible Yoga Conferences by locating venues, coordinating transportation, scheduling lodging, and all other ‘behind the scenes’ details. We communicate with other teams to create a supportive, collaborative, and collective community. By meeting regularly and designating volunteer assignments, we strive to create a structure of systematic support that enables all teammates and attendees to thrive in their experience at the Accessible Yoga Conferences.

Outreach – Outreach@accessibleyoga.org
Irene Vanhulsentop – Outreach Leader

The Outreach Team supports Accessible Yoga by identifying and reaching out to individuals and organizations that share Yoga with communities that have been excluded or under-served. To support those individuals and organizations, we created and maintain a database of contact information. Outreach shares conference, scholarship, sponsorship and International information with this database, which continues to expand.

Inreach

Cherie Hotchkiss – Inreach Leader

The Inreach Team establishes and maintains communications with the participants that attended the inaugural Accessible Yoga Conference - the first Accessible Yoga Ambassadors! We are also connecting with and welcoming new Ambassadors who are registering for this year’s conference. Inreach is organizing all data to create a single system to carry Accessible Yoga forward as it grows.

Scholarships – Scholarships@accessibleyoga.org
Nicole Sanoiski – team leader

Working together in an effort to provide financial accessibility to yoga teachers and Accessible Yoga students combined, the Scholarship Team’s goals encompass inclusive communication with new and returning Accessible Yoga Ambassadors. We strive to offer a welcoming environment for new Ambassadors through open communication. We encourage all Ambassadors to get involved by sharing the goals of Accessible Yoga with their personal networks and beyond.

Fundraising – Fundraising@accessibleyoga.org
Maria Amma Fandino co-leader, Michelle Pancake co-leader

The Accessible Yoga Fundraising team is committed to financial accessibility. We raise funds from a diversified group of sources in order to strengthen the mission and network development of Accessible Yoga, and provide access to all who desire it. By conducting donor research to identify new sources of potential funds, we attempt to reach and engage external audiences, caring about building long-term donor relationships. Our fundraising efforts strive for a fundamental transparency practice that demonstrates accountability to donors.

Communications – Communications@accessibleyoga.org
Sarah Elizabeth Heit – team leader, Natalie Dunbar, Bonny Chipman, Sarit Z. Rogers, Itaii Anthony, Durga Hanlon, Dev Rice

Through collaborative efforts the Communications Team uses all forms of social media to reach the public on behalf of the Accessible Yoga Movement. We, as a team, post to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and our Accessible Yoga Blog in an effort to keep all our yoga connections up to date on what we’re doing, where, and how. In this digital age, the Communications Team plays a vital role in connecting students to teachers, teachers to institutions, and bringing Accessible Yoga to the world.

International – International@accessibleyoga.org
Hersha Chelleram, Hong Kong; Katja Sandschneider, Germany; Karin Perkmann, Austria; Alessandra Uma Cocchi, Italy; Siapriya Rebello, Ireland; Claire Shradinthe Falthom, France; Vania Duarte, Brazil; Priya Pernilla Halden, Sweden; Luckshmi Lucy Cannon, Portugal; Laura Piquer, Spain; Heather Sheridan, Belgium; Soccoro Maldonado, Mexico/USA

Accessible Yoga Facebook Groups

Kanthi Devi Konstantopoulou – Greek
Amma Fandino – Spanish
Uma Cocchi – Italian
Priya Halldin – Swedish
Astrid van Rens – Dutch
Veronique Dallaire & Shanti Texier – French
Vania Duarte & Ivone Sousa – Portuguese

The Accessible Yoga International Team is dedicated to building a worldwide network of Accessible Yoga teachers and students. We engage yogis from all over the world to be aware of the great possibilities that yoga offers to people with disabilities or people that have been excluded from these teachings. By creating a strong network we learn from all the different circumstances in each and every country and support each other in spreading Accessible Yoga around the globe.

Advocacy – Advocacy@accessibleyoga.org
Mary Sims – team leader, Virginia Knowlton, Prakasha Capen, Jennifer Gasner, Rose Kress, Steffany Moonaz, Elle Potter

Advocacy, our newest team, came out of our last Conference, where we were inspired to work with disability rights advocates to speak up for inclusion within the yoga community. We are currently working on a campaign to expand the requirements of yoga teacher training programs to include training in Accessibility to make sure that yoga teachers are receiving proper training in this area.
We are just too busy, too occupied, too distracted, too over-scheduled.

We try so many strategies: new calendars, to-do lists, New Year’s resolutions, and endless promises to ourselves to do less.

But we don’t.

So do these three things instead.

First, commit to practicing a 20 minute-long relaxation once a day. Lie down, set a timer, cover your eyes and totally disconnect from the world.

This simple practice has proven benefits, chief among them reducing the effects of stress in the body. This includes lowering blood pressure, improving immune function, positively affecting fertility, and reducing and sometimes even alleviating tension headaches.

Letting go deeply for 20 minutes, especially in the afternoon when sleepiness and dullness overtakes the mind, is surprisingly rejuvenating and can improve mood and creativity. Many workplaces are now incorporating “nap spaces”

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Secondly, do not look at your phone during meals. Put it in another room and turn it off.

Leave your phone in the car when you go to yoga class, visit a friend, or go food shopping. Find times when you can be “off the electronic leash”. Build up to having a whole day of rest without looking at your phone.

Finally, look through your calendar every Sunday and see what you can take off for the following week.

How many of the “things we have to do” are really necessary? Can we give ourselves the gift of spaciousness by not scheduling so many things in a day.

Most of what we “have to do” can be done at a slower pace without pushing ourselves. Very few things are truly urgent.

These three simple commitments will help you find more space and silence and ease in your life.

You will have more time to create and reflect and this will be both healing and energizing.

The greatest luxury in an over-scheduled life is simply unfilled time.

No music, no cell phone, no talking, nothing.

We all crave more space and the cooling balm of uncluttered time.

Invite emptiness into your life whenever and wherever you can.

Soak in the silence and stillness to be found in your day.

This practice feeds the soul and nourishes our life.

Judith Hanson Lasater, Ph.D., Physical Therapist, has been teaching yoga since 1971. She trains students and teachers throughout the United States as well as abroad, is one of the founders of Yoga Journal magazine, and is president of the California Yoga Teachers Association. She has written nine books.
7 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LOVE YOGA PROPS

Nina Zolotow and Baxter Bell

Although we’ve heard that some yoga teachers say using props is “cheating”, we couldn’t disagree more. For us at Yoga for Healthy Aging, props are quite simply a godsend. Why? Because they:

1. **Keep Us Safe.** Using a prop can help prevent injuries caused by overstretching or misalignment. For some people—whether due to lack of flexibility or anatomy (short arms), reaching the floor is difficult. Using a prop can make the difference between overstretching your hamstrings and keeping them healthy. For people who are stiff or have back problems using a prop in a backbend can reduce low back stress. Someone with misaligned arms, with a carrying angle for example, can use a strap in Downward-Facing Dog just above the elbows to prevent uneven wear and tear of the elbow joints.

2. **Stabilize Us.** For people with balance problems or who are weak, using props in standing poses can keep them from falling. You can use the wall (with foot or hand on the wall) or you can support yourself with a chair. Even a block to support your hand can help stabilize you in the pose.

3. **Allow Us to Breathe.** Using a prop to achieve a healthy alignment—one in which your spine retains its natural curves and your chest is open—helps you to take deep and easy breaths. For example, if your hips are tight, sitting on a block or folded blanket allows you to maintain an upright posture, rather than collapsing your chest. Using props can also reduce pain in a pose, allowing you to be more comfortable, which makes breathing easier, too.

4. **Let Us Heal.** After you injure yourself or experience illness or surgery, using props allows you to gradually restore strength and flexibility.

5. **Let Us Relax.** Without props, there wouldn’t be restorative yoga! In restorative poses, the props allow you to take the shape of a pose without muscular effort so you can stay in the pose for long periods of time and relax deeply. Using props, in active poses that otherwise push you to your absolute limits, allows you to be more comfortable while still obtaining the benefits of the pose.

6. **Empower Us.** When you’re ready to progress beyond the basics, props can enable you take the first baby steps toward a challenging pose, such as Warrior 3 at a wall.

7. **Enable All of Us!** No matter what shape you’re in—even if you can’t get down to the floor, can’t stand up or can’t move parts of your body—props allow you to take the shape of a pose and obtain the benefits of stretching, moving your joints, and breathing mindfully. (Baxter teaches yoga to men with cerebral palsy who prove this every week!) So our motto is: With yoga props, there is always a way.

“**Our motto is: With yoga props, there is always a way.”**

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**Baxter Bell, MD, C-IAYT, ERYT 500**

Physician, medical acupuncturist, yoga therapist and yoga teacher

By combining his deep knowledge of anatomy and medicine with an expertise in helping people of all ages and physical conditions, Baxter teaches a healing, nurturing style of hatha yoga that balances the body’s desire for action with the mind’s need for calm and quiet. In addition to teaching classes, workshops, and retreats internationally, Baxter helps students use yoga to help heal from and/or cope with a wide range of medical conditions. The cofounder of and a writer for the popular blog Yoga for Healthy Aging, he regularly presents at Yoga Journal conferences and at the International Association of Yoga Therapy’s SYTAR Conference. He has also written articles for Yoga Journal and the International Journal of Yoga Therapy, and is featured in Yoga for Stress, a Yoga Journal DVD. He is quoted as a yoga and health expert by the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, among others.
Imagine learning not only how to relieve stress, but also how to cope with it effectively, and even how to prevent stressful reactions from being a cause of suffering for you or for others. That is the subject matter we addressed in a recent teacher training at the New York Integral Yoga Institute. We taught 20 Yoga teachers to bring the full scope of Yoga practice and its teachings, reframed as stress management, into settings where the participants are not familiar with the culture of Yoga studios.

This training equips Yoga teachers to adapt what they know to a wide variety of environments, including the workplace, healthcare facilities, schools, military bases and many other venues. By avoiding typical Yoga studio customs and Sanskrit terminology, teachers can focus on the essence of Yoga that is universally applicable, enabling them to make these transformative practices accessible to diverse populations.

The deep wisdom that Yoga brings to stress and suffering helps us understand that stress begins in the mind, with how we interpret events. For example, one person may see a difficult situation as a real threat, while another person sees that same activity as an exciting challenge to be met.

The more threatened we feel, the more our whole system responds with what is commonly called the fight or flight response. For some people, the stress of a relentless schedule—from one thing to the next—never lets up. Often the ways that many people relax, by watching TV or filling their lives with entertainment, doesn’t really allow their bodies and minds to calm down, and the nervous system to shift into rest and restore mode.

During the training, we discussed how mindful stretching, relaxation, deep breathing and meditation can quickly interrupt that cycle of overstimulation and restore physical and mental balance. These same practices done regularly, even for a short time daily, can create a deeply rooted sense of inner steadiness that enables us to withstand life’s frequent trials.

As we cultivate internal steadiness, we also develop the present moment awareness needed to make conscious choices when crisis arise, instead of reacting compulsively in ways we later regret. Regular practice equips us with tools that help us keep our balance, reflect with clarity and think creatively.

We also studied how all the branches of Yoga philosophy can be reframed into clear, simple principles that provide a resource in stressful moments. We each identified the constructive attitudes that counteract our negative thought patterns, help us sustain a clear positive mindset, and allow us to more effectively cope with poise and resilience.

Some of my favorite examples are: “Do your best, leave the...
“My efforts are both optimal and sustainable when I value my goals in balance with my own well-being.” “I do all actions for the joy of doing. I’m not depending on the results. I’m finding the fun in this moment.” It is fulfilling to think that these 20 teachers will each be sharing these practices and teachings with diverse populations, offering them all the tools of Yoga that can relieve the suffering caused by our stressed-out culture.

It is fulfilling to think that these 20 teachers will each be sharing these practices and teachings with diverse populations, offering them all the tools of Yoga that can relieve the suffering caused by our stressed-out culture.

Accessibility to yoga is often restricted by elitism and class privilege. There is a great deal of discussion about how yoga is primarily practiced by and accessible to a high-class, highly educated, thin, white, female demographic. It is this body type that is overwhelmingly featured in (stereotypical) cultural representations of the yoga body. Bodies are interpreted and framed by cultural processes that ascribe meaning and moral distinction to various individuals depending on what they look like. Bodies come to shape how we think about ourselves as we imagine how others see us. We look at our physical being and learn to internalize that image (as if we see through a looking glass to develop a sense of self).

Class is ultimately an embodied experience and signal. Our social class is written in the body in ways that are often invisible, naturalized, and normalized even as we socially construct them. For example, poverty contributes to increased rates of diseases and illness that shape our bodily experience. And through the construct of class, the body has become something to regulate and control through social manners. When people began to move to cities in masse, the new experience of living in close quarters encouraged bodily processes that were once relatively open (particularly sex and elimination) became taboo. Elite groups actively worked to impose manners on the lower class.

The hatha yoga body was sanitized when it became appropriated by highly educated, upper-class Indians and later by yoga practitioners in the West. This sanitizing process has continued today through studio systems where yoga practice is distanced from the fleshy, gross body even as we are encouraged to “drop into the body” through asana— but that “dropping in” takes place in classed ways that tie to race, size, and also gender. We are encouraged to construct our bodies, and shape them, according to class boundaries and privilege.

This is a serious problem, because if we are only encouraged to connect to the “high,” elite body we marginalize many groups from practicing yoga who may feel uncomfortable because their bodies may not fit as easily within this construction. Focusing only on the elite, “high” yoga body also means we lose sight of our connection to our own bodies, which are ultimately not classed, and are all gross. All yoga bodies are gross bodies, just as all bodies are gross bodies. Denying this is denying truth.

I think it’s high time we reclaim the gross yoga body, not only as a means of combating class privilege and inequality in yoga, but also as a means of self-love and healing, both physical and emotional.

“We need to embrace our gross yoga bodies as a path to self-love and healing, both physical and emotional.”
but also because it’s important for our own health and well-being. Reconstructing the yoga body as a real, gross, fleshy, and messy body is necessary. If your yoga practice isn’t encouraging proper digestion, including healthy burps and farts, why are you even practicing in the first place? If we aren’t practicing asana to become healthier, then what are we practicing for?

If this discussion about bodily processes is making you uncomfortable, maybe you need to be asking yourself: why? Why do bodily processes that are natural and vital for our health and well-being make us ashamed, embarrassed, or uneasy? Who has taught us this is the “proper” reaction? How do feelings of shame and embarrassment control us and help to maintain oppressive power systems?

If we want to adequately develop self-awareness, we need to become aware not just of our “high,” elite bodies but also the aspects of our bodies that are “low” class. We need to embrace our gross yoga bodies as a path to self-love and healing, both physical and emotional. And we need to encourage a culture where the gross yoga body is not shamed or “othered” but is considered normal and welcomed, so that everyone can live in a body that burps and farts without fear! Ultimately, we need to become comfortable talking about these things; and hey, a little laughter doesn’t hurt either.

This is an excerpt from a much longer piece. To read it in its entirety go to: https://amaramillerblog.wordpress.com/2016/03/27/inequality-manners-and-the-gross-yoga-body/

Amara Miller is a PhD candidate and Associate Instructor in sociology, as well as a yogi, feminist, artist, teacher, and perpetual student. She seeks to utilize a feminist and sociological understanding of the world to inform her yogic practice/teaching to better combat systems of oppression, including inequality and inaccessibility within yoga. Her dissertation looks at the impact globalization, commodification, and appropriation have had on the transformation of yoga in the last fifty years and the way marginalized teachers and activists involved in the body positivity movement resist these changes. You can find her on Facebook at Amara Miller, on Twitter @AmaraMiller27, or through her blog https://amaramillerblog.wordpress.com/.
meditation and visualization. At the beginning and end of class, we practice breathing, free weights and sometimes, vocal sound. At the range of motion, muscle resistance, the use of and Thai yoga massage combined with bodywork, combines modified techniques from yoga therapy also provide out of class workshops. Our approach on-the-job, but we Training is mostly academic credit. Helpers receiving about 60 UC students' physical strengths, weaknesses and needs, we, more importantly, come to know their minds and hearts.

We work with two assistant instructors, a few senior volunteers and about 60 UC helpers receiving academic credit. Training is mostly on-the-job, but we also provide out of class workshops. Our approach combines modified techniques from yoga therapy and Thai yoga massage combined with bodywork range of motion, muscle resistance, the use of free weights and sometimes, vocal sound. At the beginning and end of class, we practice breathing, meditation and visualization.

What is unusual about this class is the generous number of people working with each individual student. The more helpers, the more fine-tuned and detailed the experience we are able to offer. We hold postures for as long as possible, sometimes for 5 to 10 minutes or longer. It takes time to move through challenging barriers, such as edema, spasticity, neurological damage, numbness, weakness, pain, and fear. We fold, stretch, swing, rotate, twist, balance and hang upside down. We emphasize working with each student as a whole person, rather than simply responding to a clinical picture. As we get to know the details of our students’ physical strengths, weaknesses and needs, we, more importantly, come to know their minds and hearts.

Each of the students is unique, so the benefits derived from the practice vary. Examples of benefits include improved circulation, loosening of muscles and joints, reduction of pain and inflammation, increased strength and balance, enhanced digestion, improved sleep, increased ability to handle stress, and greater self-esteem. Some of the students have progressively advancing conditions; physical progress may be retarded in some cases. But, the psychological effects are often more important. A number of the students tell us the class is the highlight of their week. Others say the class is one of the few places where they feel loved and respected. Most of them acquire more satisfaction and joy in living. You can see it in their faces. Many of our students have been coming to class for years. We’re a family. Laughter and fun often ripple across the room.

The helpers derive at least as many riches from this experience as the students do. Many of them find their lives changed by learning to unhesitatingly respect and value persons they may have thought were different or “other.” They find that people living with disabilities are, in fact, just like themselves.

We’re awash in imagery. From our iPhones to billboards staring at us on street corners, from magazines vying for our attention in the checkout line, to advertisements popping up uninvited on our screens, we’re inundated with carefully crafted images and messages that collectively shape our worldview and sense of self.

It’s precisely because we’re saturated with these prolific and repetitive images that they appear normative—they’re so deeply ingrained in our mediated culture, and in ourselves, that we take them for granted. They’re expected. As a result, they both influence and shape our worldview, and in ourselves, that consciousness, and are rarely challenged en masse.

For the most part, I find that there’s a lack of understanding of these issues. People often downplay the impact these images have, or they feel themselves conscious enough to be immune to their effects. That’s also true when it comes to the ways in which current cultural representations of yoga practice and practitioners reflect and reinforce various forms of oppression.

The images we’re inundated with in the larger media culture (as well as in yoga culture) present us with incredibly limited definitions of beauty and health. In fact, the ideas of beauty and health are often confused with each other, with too many people undermining their health in the pursuit of conventional (and problematic, if not detrimental) notions of physical “perfection” and “health.”

I see the emerging conversations that question, challenge, and re-imagine these images as an opportunity to take part in consciousness-raising—a process that allows us to decolonize our own minds, examine our own internalized oppression, and work on shifting the current dominant paradigms.

Because there is nothing rebellious or revolutionary about replicating the same-old tired stereotypes. And these conversations are not an effort to blame others, whether the others are individuals or businesses profiting from these one-dimensional and static images. The purpose is to raise awareness. And isn’t that what yoga practice is all about?

It’s in the practice of consciousness-raising that difficult conversations emerge. While the conversation about body image, diversity, equity, and inclusion has grown tremendously within the yoga community over the last few years, we have not yet achieved a full paradigm shift. Representation matters, but it’s not sufficient to sprinkle in a few exceptions while the norm remains the same.

A paradigm shift requires a re-imagining of what is possible, and a re-writing of the rules. Representation also poses the questions: How are those who do not fit the normative conventions represented, and how often? Until diversity becomes the norm, rather than the token exception, we have not completed the work. Let’s get real—where does diversity of any kind exist, on a consistent basis, within the dominant media machine?

If yoga culture is truly a conscious community devoted to evolution and enlightenment, we need to dig deep, do the work, and have the dialogue, even if it’s uncomfortable (and it will be). The result will then be to shape the culture instead of replicating the toxic aspects of the larger culture. Only then can we avoid reflecting the existing sexism, able-ism, age-ism, heterosexism, size-ism, classism, racism, etc. that exist in that space.

What’s bold and daring is building something new—representations that are authentic, inclusive, and equitable.

We have the ability to consciously direct the culture of yoga, creating something subversive, powerful, and real that reflects the uniqueness of each one of us. Just as we are.

(Reprinted with permission from Yoga International, September, 2016.)

Melanie Klein, M.A., is a writer, speaker, and professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies at Moorpark College in Ventura County, CA. Her areas of interest and specialty include media literacy education, body image, and the intersectional analysis of systems of power and privilege. She is the co-editor of Yoga and Body Image: 25 Personal Stories About Beauty, Bravery + Loving Your Body (Llewellyn, 2014) with Anna Guest-Jelley, a contributing in 21st Century Yoga: Culture, Politics and Practice (Horton & Harvey, 2012), is featured in Conversations with Modern Yogi (Shroff, 2014), a featured writer in Llewellyn’s Complete Book of Mindful Living (Llewellyn, 2016) and co-editor of the new anthology, Yoga, the Body and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis with Dr. Beth Berila and Dr. Chelsea Jackson Roberts (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016). She co-founded the Yoga and Body Image Coalition in 2014. She has been practicing yoga and meditation since 1996 and currently lives in Santa Monica, CA.
SuNLiGhT ChAiR YoGA : YoGA FoR EvEryoNE

Stacie Dooreck

Have you heard yourself or others say: “I can’t do yoga until I feel better.”

Injury or illness, age or other limitations (including working all day at your desk), may prevent you from assuming your idea of a yoga posture. However with some creativity and modifications you can always do yoga.

Krishnamacharya said, “If you can breathe, you can do yoga.”

In my late 20s I got Lyme disease and after years of practicing yoga, I had to adapt my practice. Sometimes I used chairs for a supported gentle practice or held postures for a shorter period of time. Due to my own limitations in mobility I dove deeper into exploring and teaching chair yoga for seniors, those with chronic illness and other populations in need of adapting traditional yoga postures. I also found Jivana Heyman’s Accessible Yoga Training. It was the perfect approach to yoga for my personal illness and for teaching others with specific needs. Teaching students in corporate settings and students in wheelchairs helped me to be creative and figure out ways to adapt the Sivananda Yoga sequence to chairs.

Inspired by wanting to reach more people to learn that yoga can be done at all ages and stages of health, I wrote a chair yoga book, Sunlight Chair Yoga: Yoga for Everyone! It is available in print, and ebook and is free in Braille and audio versions for the blind and print impaired. In the book, you learn that there are seated and standing versions of most yoga postures that increase mobility, vitality and flexibility. Sun Salutations, forward bends, backbends, spinal twists, sitting mountain pose, eye exercises (helps computer strain) and breathing exercises (which calms or energizes and increases concentration) are practices that are available to all. I’ve seen great shifts in posture and energy from my chair yoga students using poses from a simple chair yoga series. There are many yoga postures that don’t involve any standing, and are seated, using a chair for support. There is also an abundance of yoga postures you can do without getting up or down from the chair.

“I have experienced firsthand that this approach to yoga practice eases pain, increases flexibility and strength, brings mental peace and gives all the benefits of any more rigorous yoga practice.”

At your desk, in a wheelchair, or wherever you are sitting, take a 2 minute yoga break! Re-energize with just 1–2 minutes of a yoga posture. Try it. Inhale and lift your arms up overhead, exhalate as you lower the arms. Repeat 5–10 times and see how you feel after this simple energizing pose. Lift to your capacity. You can also visualize the posture, if arm movements are limited.

In my many years of teaching yoga in assisted-living homes, hospitals, libraries, and companies, I have experienced firsthand that this approach to yoga practice eases pain, increases flexibility and strength, brings mental peace and gives all the benefits of any more rigorous yoga practice. Yoga is for everyone! So stay seated and do yoga today!

Inhale. Sit tall. Exhale. Relax!

Stacie Dooreck, Certified Sivananda Yoga Instructor since 1995, Gentle Integral Yoga Certified, Kundalini Yoga. Stacie was featured on CBS Ch. 4 News Health Watch in Miami as “breathing new life into South Florida seniors” for her chair yoga classes. She is also the author of SunLight Chair Yoga books and DVD and created/leads SunLight Chair Yoga Teacher Trainings. www.sunlightchairyoga.com
I teach Mind Body for Health Classes at City College of San Francisco and chair the Older Adults Program (Non-Credit). Our Older Adults Program (OLAD) spans the City of San Francisco. Our 21 CCSF OLAD teachers enjoy and explore over 27 sites around the city. Our students have a diversity of income levels, ages (55 to 102), ethnicities, languages, cultures, educational backgrounds, and ideas. My teaching is grounded in the training and experience I had as a professional musician, where my fascination as a singer started with medieval music, and eventually embraced all classical styles, into the 21st century. In the same way, the teachings of Patanjali and Hatha Yoga Institute, led me from learning about the classical yoga teachings of Patanjali and Hatha of 3000 years ago, to this interest in Accessible Yoga. I have a lot of freedom to bring my many studies over the years to the Mind Body for Health classes I now teach for OLAD. Music has become the background tapestry that shapes our slowness and the connection to the breath.

With Accessible Yoga, we can truly reach all populations. No one is excluded. That is in essence what I have wanted to do my whole life in teaching. I taught Voice at several colleges: Wagner College in NY at age 24, Sonoma State University in the 80’s, College of Notre Dame in the 90’s, and through it all- CCSF for 39 years. CCSF has my heart and soul. There are so many courses I have studied here after my degrees in Music/Voice from the Juilliard. I have also had the freedom to learn other disciplines beyond Music, which have enriched my life and that of my students.

I love working with our OLAD faculty. They are as young as their early thirty’s, and as old as 92. Lee Ellen teaches Computers and Photography, and is still learning new things, so she can pass them on to those younger folks! Tanako has been teaching for over 50 years, and teaches Body Dynamics with her always bright and cheery spirit. Jeanne, after her online PHD, is teaching Mind Body for us. We are designing continuously how we can best teach the diverse population of San Francisco in senior centers, at 4 CCSF campuses, and at hospitals and other sites. What subjects can we add to keep our seniors fit mentally and physically?

Mind Body for Health Classes, that Jeanne Hughes and I now teach, have become a new and exciting class for seniors, and starts with Accessible Yoga. We do a half hour of stretching and deep breathing work, a spinal twist, and seated cat cow, and move slowly, adding sound vibration. We teach a basic weight shift style from T’ai Chi Chih, which is itself a slow, moving meditation. I add Italian vowels, breath and sound. Our students can stay seated, stand, or use a chair for balance-as needed. Some people have disabilities, but they learn to adapt the work.

I am grateful that we are involved in bringing people of diverse backgrounds together-not apart. I realize that at this large community college we are in a unique position to celebrate diversity. All our classes are free, and anyone can come! Our work as faculty for OLAD changes the economic equation that stops many people from being able to study these forms rooted in Asia, and now in American life.

We celebrate the values of Patanjali and the great teachers from history, as we move together as one, with these ancient roots of the weight shift, or the feeling of being a rooted tree. We use 4 major modalities in our Mind Body classes: Accessible Yoga, Breath, Voice, and T’ai Chi Chih. We laugh, celebrate community, move together, making everything accessible. There is real teaching, but no judgement, as some sit, others stand, exploring what their bodies can do when aligned. There is kindness always, no real competition, and we finish our classes in Cosmic Consciousness pose. With Namaste, we greet everyone, and then we send everyone energy as we say their names. We build community.
In 2011, I started working with students who had experienced domestic violence at a local women’s shelter. I have since brought my offerings to people who are homeless, incarcerated, veterans, in addiction recovery, and clients with mental or behavioral health issues. I often say my students have been my best teachers. I have had many wonderful teachers and mentors.

Everyone has a different way of meeting discomfort. Some students have the courage to stop when they feel pain that they can’t breathe through and work at their edge. Others run away from pain, but may later return. We work on ways to get to the essence of a pose within their limits. And then we breathe.

In my efforts to develop a program for trauma, I learned of a new brain theory that transforms the former perspective that there are only two classes of the nervous system. This theory recognizes the possibility of a balanced emotional state. There is the high alert state on one side, the tuned out state on the other side, and the place of being quietly present in the middle. This new theory mirrors the Ayurvedic approach to understanding our responses to life. Ayurvedic philosophy states there are 3 doshas (mind/body types) and 3 gunas (the essential qualities of nature). In each of these philosophical classifications, there are the two unbalanced or more extreme states on either side with a sense of wholeness or homeostasis in the middle. Ayurvedic training prepares one to know how to balance each dosha. By observing the student’s physical posture, you can recognize your student’s state. The way each of us carries ourselves expresses the state of our being. Observing a student’s posture can help us to understand their approach to this world. We can then help them to balance their gunas, doshas, and corresponding brain/nervous system activation state. We can create a balancing treatment protocol.

I also looked deeper into a chakra-endocrine connection. Addicts are often taught about hormones in recovery, but none are given a treatment plan to balance them. As many older women can attest, finding the right hormone balance can help shift our sense of well being dramatically. All the stretching and strengthening work in that supportive yoga class can have the effect of activating the endocrine system and opening and balancing the chakras.

Knowing that chakras develop in 7 year cycles, one can identify when a trauma occurred, as...
well as the part of the body involved in the trauma. With this information, you are able to see which chakras were dominant at that time and therefore, most affected during the period of trauma. This process helps determine where there is the most blockage, and thus where the most compassion is needed. The elements of nature correspond to the chakras and can be used to treat and remove a blockage of energy in an affected chakra. For example, if there is a blockage in the root chakra which is associated with the earth element, we can strengthen it through the corresponding sense organ, the nose - using aromatherapy, and taste - using diet and herbs.

Understanding how all of these components interweave enables us to formulate the most effective treatment in terms of daily lifestyle recommendations for clients/students. Simply, the more individualized a treatment program is, the more effective it is. It is about bringing balance, understanding that “like increases like” and “opposites reduce each other”. Simplicity must be emphasized when teaching certain populations, like people that are incarcerated or in recovery. People who have been dissociated for much of their life may not benefit from sun salutations. So what will help? Meeting them where they are - which is the foundation of accessibility!

Skyler Myers, CAS, PKS, YACEP, CMT She studied over 3500 hours in yoga, massage, and Ayurvedic Health Care over 10 years. She has taught yoga for 15 years to thousands of students, and taught Yoga Alliance registered teacher trainings. In healing from her own trauma and addiction through yoga and Ayurveda, she now focuses on bringing her system to Behavioral and Mental Health clients, and women in local shelters. She currently teaches at a Cal-WORKs (Welfare) program, and has developed a 16 week curriculum to reduce relapse and recidivism through Sierra County Drug Court and Western Sierra Medical Clinic.

MAKING YOGA ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Shawnee Thornton Hardy

If offered from an accessible and mindful approach, children with autism and special needs can benefit greatly from the practice of yoga. Yoga can support children with special needs in the following areas: body awareness, motor coordination, self-regulation, social-emotional development and reducing anxiety.

Difficulty with language, vocabulary, memory and sensory regulation all play a part in body awareness. Children who experience sensory processing difficulties in particular, struggle with body awareness and sensory regulation. Various areas of the brain process sensory information and sensory input. Sensory processing involves integrating external information (from the environment) as well as internal information (from the body). Children who have sensory processing difficulties have brains that are wired differently. Their brains often misfire and are unable to process or integrate sensory information correctly. They may be extremely sensitive to the senses and internal or external stimuli. This over-stimulation may cause anxiety and may cause the child’s nervous system to be in a constant state of overdrive and tension. The sensory overload may affect the child’s mood, behavior, social relationships and participation in daily activities. The practice of yoga supports children with sensory processing difficulties and limited body awareness by calming the nervous system, supporting the brain in processing sensory information more effectively, strengthening balance and motor coordination, teaching body part vocabulary, and connecting to their bodies.

Yoga may also support children with self-regulation challenges by providing learning tools to express and release difficult emotions. In particular, children with language processing deficits struggle with expressing their emotions. In many cases, the struggle to communicate how they feel becomes an even bigger frustration and can cause meltdowns, outbursts and distress. Specific yogic breathing strategies allow children to release physical tension and stress from their bodies when they are experiencing difficult or challenging emotions. Children with special needs may develop greater awareness of their emotions and sensations in their bodies through mindfulness and breathing practices. These practices foster a mind-body connection and support increased self-regulation, self-awareness and more positive self-esteem.

In addition to increased body awareness and self-regulation, yoga games and interactive activities...
Shawnee is a C-IAYT Certified Yoga Therapist, 500 E-RYT and RCYT (Registered Children’s Yoga Teacher). She is the Founder/Owner of ABLE Yoga Therapy and Founder/Owner of Asanas for Autism and Special Needs. Shawnee has a Master’s in Special Education and has worked as a Behavior Specialist/Consultant for over a decade. She authored the Book Asanas for Autism and Special Needs – Yoga to Help Children with Their Emotions, Self-Regulation and Body Awareness and developed the C.A.L.M.M Yoga Toolkit to provide a tool for teaching yoga to children of diverse abilities. Shawnee’s passion is in making yoga accessible and safe for all bodies and abilities and facilitating healing through asana, meditation, mindfulness, nutrition and healthy lifestyle.

Teaching yoga to children with special needs requires patience, a positive approach and an understanding of supports and accommodations that make the practice accessible and sets the child up for success.

Here are a few ways to make yoga accessible to children with special needs.

• Offer visual tools and supports. Children with language processing difficulties and children who are visual learners benefit from visual supports by increasing understanding and decreasing anxiety. They will be more motivated by predictive, interesting and interactive prompts.

• When giving instructions, use direct and concrete language. Children with language processing difficulties and limited attention will respond to clear, concise direction and well-defined expectations.

• Use yoga props, a chair, a wall, whatever is needed and available, in order to ensure safety and success. Children with balance issues, motor-coordination difficulties and limited mobility will benefit from props to support their unique physical needs and challenges.

• Set them up for success! Offer physical poses and breathing strategies that are approachable and facilitate success in order to increase self-esteem and gain interest and motivation in their yoga practice.

Offering yoga to children with special needs is a tremendous gift and when taught in an accessible way, provides a positive and supportive experience for the child as well as the teacher. Making yoga inclusive and accessible to children of all abilities fosters community, connection and belonging.

CIRCLCES
NMO Patient Day

Sunday, October 22, 2017 from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Location
Stanford School of Medicine

Event Information
- Learn more about NMO
- Meet other NMO patients and caregivers
- Enroll in NMO research

Register for this event using the URL below!
- http://tinyurl.com/P0201STAN

Questions?
Please contact Anna Tomczak by phone at 650-721-0489 or by email at atomelie@stanford.edu

Stanford Medicine
As pediatric therapists and yoga instructors, it seems that time speeds up while the body and brain slow down. Relationships mean more, things mean less.

“In style” is less about fashion and more about comfort.

Recently while vacationing, I took a “Yoga on the Grass” class from an experienced and mature yoga instructor. She offered headstand as a pose, while providing support to get into the pose if desired, as well as alternative poses. Yes, I wanted to do headstand. Yes, I had done it easily when I was younger. Yes, I had injured my neck doing headstand improperly several years ago. Yes, it took me a long time, a lot of ice, PT, and Chiropractic to recover and have pain free neck movement. But still, I really, really wanted to do it.

I made a conscious decision to say, “No.” “Not today. Not in a group class. Not with someone who didn’t know me.” It was incredibly difficult, yet I knew it was right for me on that day.

I felt empowered by my experience with Accessible Yoga…

“Not about the headstand. It’s about the head space — and the heart center.”

Having the humility to say “No.”
Having the courage to say, “How?”
How can I get the benefits of the pose while honoring my body, mind, and spirit?
How can I prevent an injury while still experiencing the sensation?
How can I practice now to ensure I will be able to continue to practice in the future?
How do I turn the “no” into “yes?”

After reflecting on what it means to say “Yes” to self-care and preservation, I know what I would say to my younger self, “It’s not about the headstand. It’s about the head space - and the heart center.”

Mary Gengler Fuhr, OTR/L, RYT, C/NDT, CIMI: Mary is an Occupational Therapist and founder of Maple Valley Pediatric Therapy and Relaxing Resources, PLLC. She has over 30 years of experience as a pediatric OT with expertise in sensory integration/processing, neurodevelopmental treatment, pediatric massage and yoga for children. She is co-author of the book, ‘Pediatric Massage for the Child with Special Needs’. Mary teaches workshops on a number of topics (including yoga, movement and mindfulness, and self-regulation) and provides therapeutic consultations throughout the U.S. and internationally.
As pediatric therapists and yoga teachers, we support children and young adults with a variety of developmental, physical, sensory, emotional, and learning differences. Through our teachings we have witnessed the many benefits that yoga and mindfulness bring to our students. We partner with parents and family members as they support and foster growth in their children. We work in private and public schools, clinics, and private homes. Our goal is to help children learn, achieve, and function comfortably and successfully at home, school, and in their community.

By practicing yoga and mindfulness, children also improve their balance skills, postural control, self-awareness, and self-regulation. They can achieve a calm and alert state so they can effectively attend to the world around them and the thoughts and sensations inside of them.

As pediatric therapists and yoga teachers we have experience in playfully engaging children in mind/body activities. We consider the individual child’s strengths, interests, and areas of concern to select and design yoga and mindfulness activities and sequences that offer the “just right” experience on any given day. We assess the child’s skills and sensory processing so that we can be sensitive to their needs. We consider how we can adapt the environment to make it comfortable and supportive so they can be available to learn and interact. We offer props, audio and visual aids, and other supports while making incremental changes as needed.

By promoting a safe and nurturing environment, the child is able to experience a sense of contentment and joyfulness. We observe the child before, during, and after a yoga practice and notice changes in energy, breathing patterns, emotional stability, and movement ability. We ask the child to communicate how they feel and with our support make changes that are meaningful for them. We teach parents and teachers how to connect with the true self -the peace, joy, love, and light that we all have inside of us.

Brenda Bakke, MEd, PT, CYT, C-IAYT: Brenda is an experienced pediatric physical therapist who has practiced for over 30 years in a variety of settings. She is a Registered Adult Yoga teacher & Certified Children’s Yoga Therapist who has trained with Sonia Sumar, creator of Yoga for the Special Child. She is contributing author of the book “Healing Practices to Help Kids Grow up Easier”. Brenda teaches workshops on a number of topics (including accessible yoga, movement and mindfulness, and self-regulation). Brenda has her Master’s degree in education, is a certified Accessible Yoga Teacher, and has extensive training in Yoga Therapy. She currently works in a school district & private practice.

Mary Gengler Fuhr currently works in a school district & private practice. She has a degree in education, is a certified Accessible Yoga Teacher, and has extensive training in Yoga Therapy. She teaches workshops on a number of topics (including accessible yoga, movement and mindfulness, and self-regulation). Mary has her Master’s degree in education, is a certified Accessible Yoga Teacher, and has extensive training in Yoga Therapy. She currently works in a school district & private practice.

"All children are capable of practicing and experiencing the benefits of yoga and mindfulness"
“Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.”

From where does movement arise and what movement is authentic? These were the burning questions as I lay sprawled with my bolsters on my living room floor. It had been a year since becoming totally paralyzed from the neck down. As a yogi my recovery was charting new ground in the world of spinal cord injury and quadriplegia. Wherever that ancient quote above had come from, I could feel it resonate in a place deep within my being.

How do my prior tensions and gestures affect my physical process now? I was certainly aware of my nervous system and its every pulsation as input I could feel inside – albeit quite differently. The tension could be expressed as a change in rhythm, a shift of intensity or a flutter of tissue. All of the sensations were a new language. I became more and more curious. I wanted to explore if there was any way a person could feel the inside without personality. I remember one morning, just after waking up, when I literally was not able to lift or move any part of my body from my lying down position. I couldn’t lift my arms, legs or head. Anything I could access, my head, neck and shoulders, felt ridiculously, disproportionately heavy and large. It felt like it would always be so. There was no movement, at least nothing the human eye could see or detect.

Nothing outside of the source, that is. The amazing thing is, I was experiencing all sorts of things. I was now exploring this somewhat familiar terrain andcharting territory from a new perspective, from the inside out. I was now exploring this somewhat familiar terrain and charting territory from a new perspective, from the inside out. The irony is, on the outside, there is no perceptible signs of movement, yet on the inside there is a plethora of electrical, organic pulses and currents that are coming and going. Is this what it is doing? This is an orchestration of the basic elements of movement from our primordial being. You could say it is - the wave of life.

“The wave of life: A paralyzed yogi walks inside the mystery of healing”

Mary-Jo Fetterly

Mary-Jo Fetterly is a mother of two a Yoga Teacher/Therapist and President of Trinity Yoga Inc. She began her formal training in yoga in the mid 80’s, while raising children and studying psychology. In 1995, she received a “Body Centered Therapy” certificate in massage and Somatic based bodywork. She went on to train with Dr. Carolyn Myss who is now one of the leading educators in the field of energy anatomy and intuitive medicine; and then David Swenson, Tim Miller & Ana Forest in the early rise of Ashtanga or hot yoga. Subsequently, she opened “Shanti Yoga Works”, the first yoga studio to be established in Nelson, BC. During the first operational years of the Shanti Yoga studio, Mary-Jo developed a 200-hour yoga teacher training program, and formed the company “Trinity Yoga”, which has trained hundreds of teachers since its inception. On January 25 2004, Mary-Jo had a skiing accident that crushed her C4, C5 and C6 vertebrae and left her paralyzed from the neck down. She was diagnosed with Quadriplegia-complete, a “worst case diagnosis” predicted by doctors. Her journey back to health and coping with her current situation – defied odds, is a miraculous recovery due to hard work, faith, knowledge, insight, determination, and strong willed optimism. Mary-Jo has continued her studies in Somatic Psychotherapy, Yoga therapy and advanced teacher training. She is a student at the University of Waterloo, completing a Social Work Degree. She has been a long time student of Yogarupa Rod Stryker the esteemed North American Tantra master, with whom she is currently working on her master teacher training with. The devastation, difficulties and challenges of the spinal cord injury haven’t held her back as Mary-Jo continues to mother, teach and inspire others to engage in their own personal journeys of healing and transformation “Since my injury 11 years ago I have been teaching in and around Vancouver initially as my old “teacher” self and slowly but surely I have become very compelled and moved by what yoga can do for all people in every different physical or mental capacity.” Mary-Jo is a leader in the area of Adaptive and Therapeutic Yoga and was a guest at last years International Conference SYTAR. She has been an Ambassador at the Rick Hansen Foundation for 8 years and now serves on the Inner Advisory Board. From 2004 through to 2008 she served on Yoga Outreach board. She has developed ART - Adaptive/Restorative/Therapeutic training for community health care professionals and yoga teachers, a hands on ‘learn from one who knows’ professionally credited CEU. To learn more visit: www.trinityyoga.net or www.mary-jo.com

Mary-Jo was now exploring this somewhat familiar terrain and charting territory from a new perspective, from the inside out. This context is encouraged with the practice of yoga. This inner awareness is patiently honed into existence. Like many yogis I could spend what seemed like an eternity in my able-body, in one pose, going deeper and deeper. Now the ‘inside’ was all I could really feel. Yet this land of un-movement movement had a surprising array of subterranean pulses, waves, beats and rhythms that totally took me away.

The irony is, on the outside, there is no perceptible signs of movement, yet on the inside there is a plethora of electrical, organic pulses and currents that are coming and going. Is this what it is doing? This is an orchestration of the basic elements of movement from our primordial being. You could say it is - the wave of life.
CELEBRATING UNIQUE BODIES AND SOULS

Kerri Hanlon

“Every body has to be unique because every body is carrying a unique soul.” — Osho

Of all the readings I’ve done for my teacher trainings, this is the passage that has spoken to me the most. The quote comes from Osho’s Yoga; the Science of the Soul, from a section where he speaks of the necessity of a posture being steady and comfortable. Osho also says, “Be comfortable, because if you are not comfortable in the body, you cannot long for other blessings that belong to deeper layers.”

In a society where there is great focus on the external body, this passage has meaning for many. In every class I teach, I try to infuse the importance of stepping into our own bodies, and celebrating our bodies, because they are wonderful vessels carrying our souls. Some days it resonates, others it doesn’t. Even for me.

But here is what I know is true: I’ve seen individuals, with bodies that are very different than the ‘norm,’ step into their greatness by acknowledging areas where their bodies don’t serve them.

“I’ve seen individuals, with bodies that are very different than the ‘norm,’ step into their greatness by acknowledging areas where their bodies don’t serve them.”

He is a yogi. When we opened Yoga Home, it was always a dream of mine to create a yoga class where Sean could be with other beautiful bodies and souls just like him. The issue of “inclusion” is often a hot topic in education – do you place a child like Sean in a typical classroom with supports, or have him attend a school that specializes in serving students with similar needs? It’s a deeply personal choice and there is no right or wrong. The same applies for yoga.

Sean is very welcome in our classes at Yoga Home, and he has enjoyed everything from Power Flow to Vinyasa to Restorative. He (and I) come into class with the expectation that he will participate as he is able to – and that just being in the room and in breath with community is enough.

Adaptive Yoga is simply that – adapting the practice to make it accessible for all. We’ll use blocks, blankets, sand bags, chairs and straps to bring bodies of all abilities into their fullest expression of yoga postures, all with the common goal of building the mind-body-spirit connection. And yes, celebrating our beautiful, unique bodies and souls.

At the end of the day, isn’t that what yoga is all about?

A note to the reader:

Sean, Kerri’s son, who is so beautifully described in this article, recently passed away. He was 19 years old and spent those 19 years teaching the world about resiliency, openness, warmth, and joy. In other words, he was a yogi. As his mother describes him, he was a “unique” and “beautiful soul”. Thank you Kerri, for sharing him with so many over the years. The world has been blessed by his presence.

Kerri believes the heart of a yoga practice is the art of acceptance, of ourselves and others. It’s her belief that yoga is for everyone – all ages, all abilities, all body shapes and sizes – that sparked her to partner with Maura to open Yoga Home. Kerri has always possessed a strong sense of nurturing and an abundance of compassion for others, but with yoga she learned to be compassionate with herself. Her classes are filled with inspiration, empowerment and gratitude. As her personal yoga practice has evolved, she’s come to listen to her body and spirit and see what type of practice she needs that day and encourages her students to do the same. Whether she’s teaching an invigorating Power Class or soothing body and soul with a Restorative Class, Kerri prioritizes holding sacred space so her students are free to completely drop into their practice. She is passionate about bringing Adaptive Yoga to the Philadelphia region, and credits her son, Sean, with being her inspiration. She created Yoga Home’s Adaptive Yoga program with classes for children and adults with physical, cognitive and/or emotional disabilities at Yoga Home, at schools, day and residential programs. She also leads the Yoga for Caregivers Program at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Kerri is Co-Executive Producer of “On the Other Side of the Fence”, the international award winning documentary that spreads the message of acceptance and diversity. Recognized by the United Nations for Extraordinary Public Service, Gold Medalist at the New York International Film Festival and Emmy Winner, the film chronicles relationships between children with different abilities as they stage a musical. Kerri also serves as an Ambassador for Accessible Yoga and lululemon. She brings her 20+ years experience in Consumer Insight, Marketing and Development, most recently with PBS and NPR, to the world of yoga. Her focus is on building community – be it through public media, celebrating all individuals for their unique contributions, teaching yoga classes or creating the sacred space of Yoga Home. Trainings and Certifications: • Opening Yoga Instructor Certified, Adaptive Yoga Level I/II with Matthew Sanford • 200-Hr YTT: LIVE LOVE TEACH with Philip Urso • Yin Yoga Certified with Corina Benner • Reiki Level 1 Certified
In college, my struggle with the practice of yoga was consistent. My interest in the sport intensified. Yoga was like a beacon of hope, calling me back to the mat. At the gym, I encountered Amy Weintraub and LifeForce Yoga. I did not know I was practicing LifeForce Yoga or learning tools to manage my mood. What I did know was how good I felt after class. After years of practice, I have come to realize that each one is so much more than our changing emotions, so much more than our changing mood states. Each of us is whole, connected, here and now.

The balancing practices include sound to burn off the excess energy for the anxious mood. We begin with a practice to meet that mood. I use breathing practices or yoga poses that include sound to burn off the excess energy for the anxious mood. After meeting the mood, we move into intervening practices. These practices are calming, and soothing, like a quiet breathing practice, in a restorative yoga pose, with a peaceful image, and a soothing sound.

I have witnessed a profound change over the years, both in myself and my clients. There is nothing more inspiring than watching someone use a tool to uncover wholeness. I believe in LifeForce Yoga as a way to transformation. It allows each individual to experience the self, unlimited and untainted by the constrictions of life.

LifeForce Yoga has taught me that each one is so much more than our changing emotions, so much more than our changing mood states. Each of us is whole, connected, here and now.
The moment I drove into Shambhala Mountain Center, high in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, I began to worry. I had come to this spiritual retreat center to teach yoga at the “Courageous Women, Fearless Living” retreat I co-founded for women touched by cancer. The women I met that day—all 65 of them—weren’t those who had already beaten back the disease and needed to replenish their energy or regain their strength and flexibility—I had plenty in my yoga tool kit for them. These were women reeling from a new diagnosis or right in the throes of wrenching treatment—or, in a few cases, dying from the metastasized cells that had taken over their bodies. Could yoga really help them? I joined the other presenters on opening night. Judy Lief, a longtime Buddhist teacher and author of Making Friends with Death, who teaches mindfulness training and meditation practice, was there, as was Victoria Maizes, MD, executive director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, who shares the latest findings in integrative cancer research and nutrition.

I was eager to meet our guests and still hopeful that my trusty tool kit—poses for stiffness, digestive woes, and lymphedema; breathing techniques for nausea, fatigue, and anxiety—would help them through at least some of their challenges. As we all sat together in the Shrine Room, I met one woman who shook with their challenges. As we all sat together in the Shrine Room, I met one woman who shook with their challenges. As we all sat together in the Shrine Room, I met one woman who shook with their challenges. As we all sat together in the Shrine Room, I met one woman who shook with their challenges. As we all sat together...

YOGA AND CANCER: A HEALING JOURNEY

Linda Sparrowe

The moment I drove into Shambhala Mountain Center, high in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, I began to worry. I had come to this spiritual retreat center to teach yoga at the “Courageous Women, Fearless Living” retreat I co-founded for women touched by cancer. The women I met that day—all 65 of them—weren’t those who had already beaten...
The individuals we serve through Integrative Awareness Medicine suffer from a range of health conditions not limited to untreated superficial injuries, incompletely healed broken bones, amputations, spinal conditions, chronic disease, and complications from violent trauma. Individuals we serve also suffer from a range of mental health conditions and associated behavior that is mostly criminalized, including schizophrenia, mood disorders, violent or psychotic tendencies, general malaise, and other symptoms associated with long-term impoverishment or chronic homelessness. We tailor functional yoga therapy groups and facilitate one-on-one sessions to provide human connection and individual trauma processing.

Permanent and affordable Housing is a foremost priority in the healing of mental illness and trauma associated with the growing homelessness epidemic. Provision of housing addresses external and unmet material needs. However, what comes after permanent housing to facilitate the healing of internal dimensions? We strive to provide Los Angeles County with cost effective and evidence-informed programming for increasing individual well being within the chronically homeless and permanently housed populations. We serve individuals living on the street, in tents, shelters, hotels, or permanent housing; those who are graduating from treatment programs; individuals reentering society after incarceration; clients engaging in after-care; and many who are living and working in the community. We focus on spiritual healing and provide holistic and culturally relevant programming. We encourage building on a foundation in ethics to support and cultivate an internal foundation of well being. We find that this foundation is necessary to maintaining job placement, engaging in educational programs, and supporting personal evolution.

Integrative Awareness Medicine is collaborating with the County of Los Angeles in the development of a holistic framework for “Applied Resiliency Across Systems.” We believe in the necessity for conscious self-regulation of physiological systems into homeostasis. We see the causal relationship between historical trauma and noncommunicable disease. We support public servants in their efforts to practice and educate the public on holistic amelioration and reversal of negative health conditions. Most importantly, we believe in demolishing barriers to access for the healing of chronic homelessness.

Existing programming and developmental systems-change frameworks are designed to be holistic, culturally relevant, trauma and resiliency-informed, grounded in ethics, and appropriately tailored for specific constituencies. God Bless you and all those connected.

Integrative Awareness Medicine operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, rendering services of trauma healing, Therapeutic and Accessible Yoga, and Mindfulness programming within chronically homeless communities of Los Angeles County. For more information, visit our website at www.iamwc.org.

Freidel Kushman With God and Yoga Therapy I holistically healed my own “diagnosed schizophrenia”. My partners and I operate a nonprofit organization rendering trauma-healing services at the street level within the chronically homeless community, and collaborate in service with the County of Los Angeles to develop and implement a holistic framework across LA County government agencies and social service institutions for the healing and decriminalization of Chronic Homelessness, Mental Illness, Trauma, and associated conditions. I am enrolled in year 3 of Loyola Marymount University’s Yoga Therapy Rx program. My life teachers include Swami Sitaramananda, Swami Dharmananda, Jivana Heyman, Bidyut Bose, Durga Leela, Cheri Clampett, Larry Payne, Arun Deva, Amy Wheeler, and countless homeless humans and animals across the globe. www.iamwc.org Honored to share this space together. May all beings know Peace.
ACCESS TO YOGA IS A MATTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Virginia??

People with all types of disabilities can benefit as much as anyone from the practice of yoga. Disabled yoga practitioners recognize the tremendous power that yoga has to transform and improve our existence and relationships. It enables us to heal ourselves and the planet. We learn and we teach.

Yogis realize a broader spectrum of beneficial effects when their yoga practice extends beyond the postures, or Asanas - the third limb of yoga. Advancement in yoga is predicated on the foundational first and second limbs of yoga, the Yamas & Niyamas (restraints and observances). These principles are our guide to leading an ethical life and are essential to attaining meaningful benefits from the other six limbs of yoga.

Yoga teachers are called to assist others in achieving yoga’s transformative benefits. This assistance must include everyone, regardless of ability. Offering yoga to select students based on perceived mental or physical ability, while excluding others who have disabilities and may benefit most appreciably from yoga, violates such Yamas as Ahimsa (requiring proper relationship with others), Satya (requiring action consistent with truth), and Daya (requiring efforts to alleviate suffering, such as that caused by dehumanization).

Similarly, exclusion based on specific characteristics such as disability violates federal civil rights law. Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, and requires reasonable accommodations and modifications to afford people with disabilities equality of opportunity to participate. Thus, under both ancient and modern precepts, access to yoga is a matter of social justice.

Discrimination against yogis with disabilities violates the spirit of yoga and the letter of the law. Yoga studios are charged with upholding the law just as yoga teachers are charged with elevating the collective consciousness. Unjustified exclusion of yogis with disabilities violates the law and generates negativity. Yoga asks each and treat everyone with justice, respect and equality. In this way and in these troubled times, yoga teachers can function as peace workers and foster inclusion.

It was fitting when San Francisco was recently mobilizing against hate groups that a number of yogis, rather than counter protesting, held yoga and meditation practice outside the Civic Center. They gathered to support peace and create more space within to help people come to common understanding, according to Seva Simran Singh, who led the meditation.

As a disabled civil rights advocate, I am often locked into fight mode. Yoga improves my mental, physical and spiritual health in ways I could not have imagined, and profoundly affects my ability to connect with the peaceful energy Singh describes. I believe that our survival depends on the recognition that we are interconnected. What happens to one, happens to us all. We cannot move forward by leaving others behind.

People with disabilities are our teachers. They challenge us to demonstrate our commitment to yogic principles, to honor every person, to seek beyond what we already think we know, and to willingly explore ways to ensure that all who wish to practice yoga have access.

A powerful yoga practice does not require specific physical movements. It does require us to be aware of our true relationship with others.

“A powerful yoga practice does not require specific physical movements. It does require us to be aware of our true relationship with others.”

Do we have a bio for Virginia?
I
My body, a live wire,
too much electricity charges through,
power, power, power with no control.
A muscle fires drawing left arm up, again,
a hidden train conductor got stuck
and goes over the same track, over and over. I know what I want to say,
but my tongue is wrapped in thick felt,
a warm blanket muffles my words
leaving me frustrated seeing incomprehension
in a stranger's face. Da?
I used to want to punish this wired body
that never moved the way physical therapists wanted it to.
I tried to remember to swallow
but, concentrating on saying “perplexing”
a blob of saliva runs down my chin.
Never mind trying to walk,
my right hip wants to flex when the left one bends,
leaving me in a gravity defying crouch,
for which no balance can compensate.
After ten steps, a jolt of pain runs through my lower back and right hip,
leaving me sweating, and oh so irritated!

II
I go to Yoga with this live body.
JoAnn, the teacher, reminds me to breathe.
I giggle because I forgot again.
Getting out of the electric wheelchair,
I feel free and safe on the floor,
I cannot fall because I'm already down.
I cannot get any lower.
From all fours, I straighten legs,
I rise to downward facing dog,
an upside down V,
stretching my lower back.
JoAnn, using belt around hips,
pulls back weight to my heels.
Sandbag on hands outweigh hidden train conductor's control of old patterns.
My shoulders extend with controlled power
I actually feel graceful
Stretched muscles get weary.

I lower myself down.
Later in rest pose,
I lie down on my back and place feet on chair with knees bent
to avoid right hip problem,
arms spread, palms up,
I remember to breathe
as tired muscles grow quiet.
I still enjoy the paradox:

It is difficult to imagine being in someone else's body, to understand the difficulties he or she might be dealing with daily. Although as yoga teachers teaching in the disability community, this is exactly what we try to do! Many years ago a student gave me this poem she wrote that uniquely presents her important perspective on her yoga practice in her own words. I am grateful to Mariana Ruybalid for her permission to share this with you here.

For books by Mariana go to https://www.createspace.com/3617176
The recent death of beloved yoga teacher and writer Michael Stone has been haunting me. I think there are some important lessons in his personal struggle that we need to learn from as a yoga community. Even though he was teaching the world how to deal with the pain of our human existence, he was personally dealing with bipolar disorder, which he had not publicly discussed.

I have no problem with yoga teachers keeping their personal problems to themselves, because that’s what healthy boundaries are. We are here to serve our students and not just talk about our own issues, especially if they’re unresolved. For myself, it is a constant struggle to find a balance between over-sharing and being authentic in my teaching. What I’m concerned about is the idea that as a yoga teacher we have to achieve some kind of perfection in our own lives and that our faults somehow reduce our capacity to teach. In fact, I think it’s the other way around: our personal challenges make us more effective teachers because we are forced to apply the teachings in our own lives.

Accessible Yoga, the organization I founded, is dedicated to changing the consciousness around who can practice yoga and who can consider themselves a yogi. If, as yoga teachers, we try to force ourselves into a perfect mold, only sharing the attractive parts, only demonstrating the poses we’re good at, then we’re digging a hole for our students. If we can show our students that we are also struggling, and if we can be honest about our own path, then I think we have the opportunity to lift our students up with us. In fact, we lift the whole yoga community any time we speak honestly and with integrity.

Unfortunately, these days we see that aspirational marketing seems to work. We look at the covers of yoga magazines and that somehow inspires us to want a perfect body and a perfect life (as if that actually exists!). So when yoga teachers neglect to share their truth, they contribute to a communal delusion that yoga is for some and not for all.

Personally, my interest in spirituality began when I was about eleven years old and I realized I was gay. I felt divorced from the “normal” life I saw around me. It was a horrible feeling. I was miserable for many years. Ironically, that feeling of being an outsider is at the core of the spiritual teachings. The ability to be the witness and stand apart from our ego and connect to a deeper place within us is what yoga is all about.

It took many years for me to accept that I was gay, and even longer to acknowledge the beauty of being different and of being the outsider. Then in the late 80s I was surrounded by friends dying of AIDS. It was devastating. Only by confronting that pain was I able to do something positive in response, to bring yoga to the HIV/AIDS community in San Francisco. Those early classes are what led me to begin sharing yoga with people with disabilities. That is what eventually grew into Accessible Yoga.

The truth is no one deserves the yoga teachings more than anybody else. These teachings, like all spiritual understanding, are universal truths that belong to everyone regardless of ability or background. As yoga teachers, it is our job to find ways to make these teachings accessible and universal. If we control and limit the teachings, we expose a limitation in our own understanding.

Most of us are striving for equality in our communities, both socially and economically. But if we don’t have equality in spiritual teachings then we’re really in trouble. Let’s take our yoga teachers down off of their pedestals, and give them a chance to be human with all their weaknesses and all their problems. In our shared humanity and suffering, we can join hands and support each other to dive deep inside, where all yoga teachings take us—to a place where we are all perfect and free. Thank you, Michael Stone, for continuing to teach us, even in your death.

Jivana Heyman, eRYT-500, C-IAYT, IYM, is founder of Accessible Yoga, which includes Conferences, Trainings, and a new online Network dedicated to sharing yoga with every body. He is co-owner of the Santa Barbara Yoga Center, and an Integral Yoga Minister. With over twenty years of training and teaching in the Integral Yoga tradition, Jivana has specialized in teaching yoga to people with disabilities with an emphasis on sharing yoga philosophy. His passion is making yoga accessible to everyone. He has led over forty yoga teacher training programs over the past 16 years, created the Accessible Yoga Training program in 2007, and currently leads trainings around the US and in Europe. In December 2015, Jivana was invited to teach Accessible Yoga at the United Nations in Geneva, and continues to work toward expanding access to the teachings of yoga. For more information about Jivana and to find dates for upcoming Accessible Yoga Training programs please visit www.accessibleyoga.org.
JOIN THE GROWING ACCESSIBLE YOGA NETWORK

An online yoga community for all of us!

Free teacher and studio listings

A resource for students looking for the right yoga teacher or yoga studio

Search by location or topic
For example, “Do you know anyone in San Francisco who has experience teaching yoga for people with arthritis?”

www.accessibleyogannetwork.com

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We want to thank everyone who generously offered their time and resources to all of our fundraising campaigns and events. We couldn’t have done it without you!
The Accessible Yoga 4-day training shifts the perception of modern yoga and returns it to the essence of the yoga teachings. By making yoga accessible, the practitioner and the teacher alike develop a deeper understanding of the true practice of yoga. Jivana Heyman is an incredible teacher who inspires others by his being. He is a living example of authenticity and service. – Hersha Chellaram

The Accessible Yoga Training focuses on how to make the yoga teachings available to everyone, regardless of ability or background. We’ll explore the many ways that Yoga practice can be shared with students who have disabilities, chronic illnesses, or with seniors. We’ll take a fresh look at why and how we practice, and from that new place of understanding, how we can share yoga with every body.

30 Yoga Alliance CEUs

“The Accessible Yoga 4-day training shifts the perception of modern yoga and returns it to the essence of the yoga teachings. By making yoga accessible, the practitioner and the teacher alike develop a deeper understanding of the true practice of yoga. Jivana Heyman is an incredible teacher who inspires others by his being. He is a living example of authenticity and service.” – Hersha Chellaram

Visit accessibleyoga.org/training.html for more information.
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