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AUSTRALIAN

yoga

JOY

LIFE IN BALANCE

78  
Ways to  
Ease Pain,  
Anxiety,  
Illness, Stress  
& more

5 Top  
Healing  
Retreats

AT HOME  
YIN PRACTICE

PROTECT  
YOUR LOWER  
BACK

ISSN 1837-2406

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ISSUE 77  
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*-Oscar Pellizzon*

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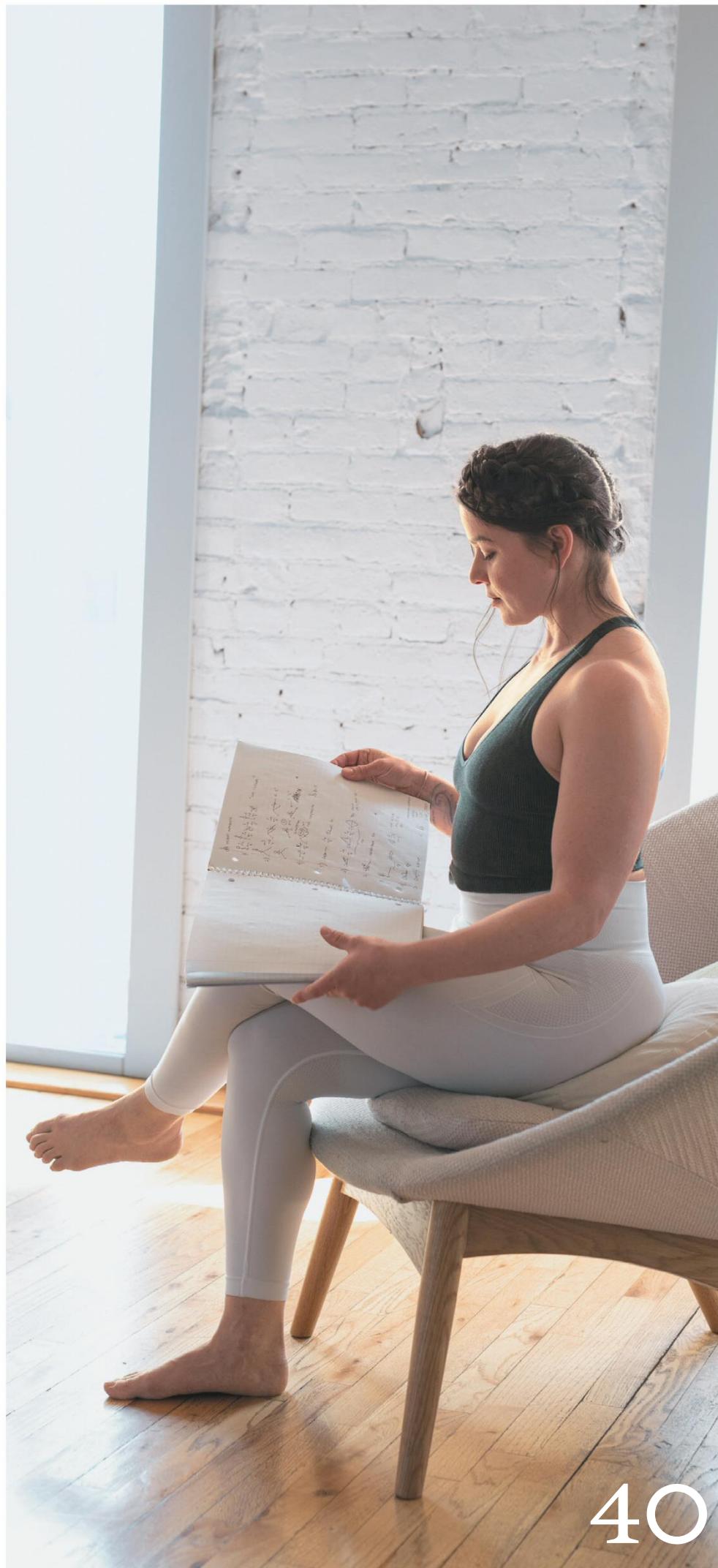
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARY JOBBE

# *Yoga Retreats for All Types*

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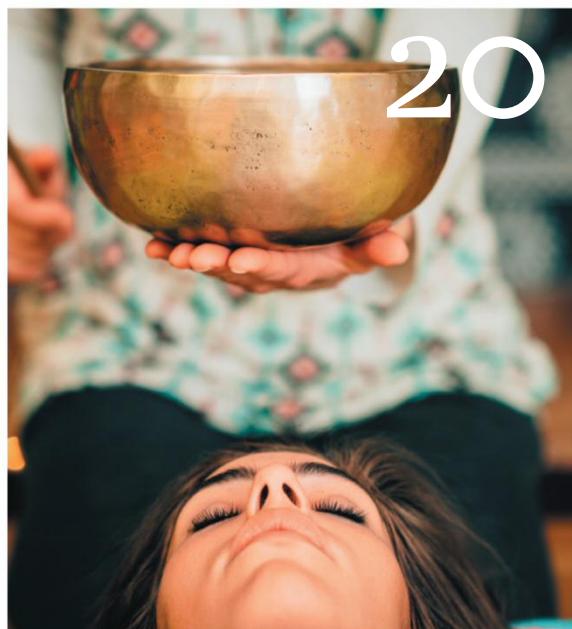
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# Transform YOUR LIFE

**TO TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE**, you must change your thinking, as Sally Kempton points out on page 56. To change your health, happiness, wealth, relationships or business, you must change your attitude—which in many circumstances is the only thing you have control over anyway. Changing your attitude towards something like, say, Diabetes (page 40), transforms the way you approach it. In doing so, you change the interaction. If you change, it has to change, too. The more you change, the more it changes. Be it your practice, your finances, your relationship with your parents or significant other or

a big life challenge, like Menopause (page 60) or cancer (page 28), the change in your attitude will transform you for the better. So how to do start? Well, as Sally says, transformation is between being and becoming, between being unwell and becoming better, between being unhappy and becoming joyous. So what's the gateway or bridge from being to becoming? In many cases, it's self-reflection, meditation and of course, yoga. We genuinely hope you enjoy this issue.

**NAMASTE**  
**THE YOGA JOURNAL TEAM**

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# AUSTRALIAN yoga JOURNAL

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herbs for balance



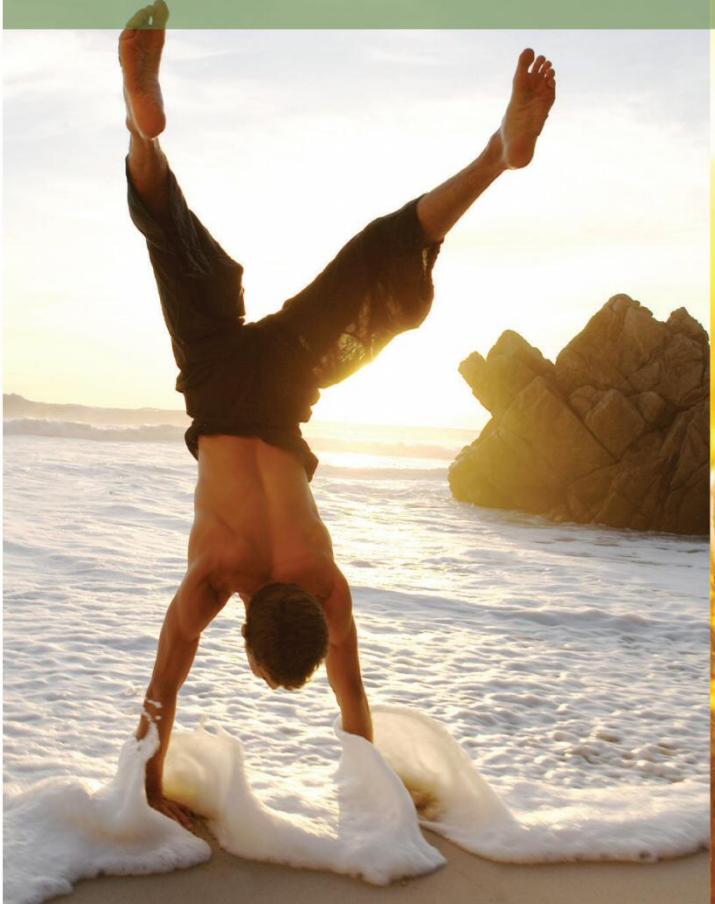
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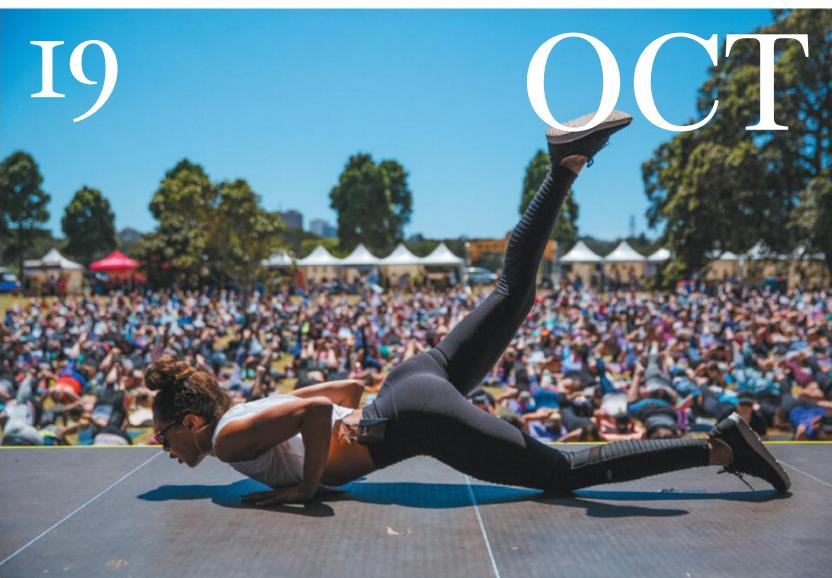
# What's On

## AUGUST



### iRest Meditation Workshop Perth August 18

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### Wanderlust

Brisbane Oct 19 Sydney Oct 26 Melbourne Nov 9

Wanderlust is back with a stellar program of yoga, meditation, exercise, motivational speakers and much more. Tickets are now on sale.



### IYTA Open Day - Yoga Teacher Training Sydney Oct 27

You are invited to a free Yoga class and Q&A session with IYTA. Find out more about the IYTA Teacher training courses including Foundation Yoga Studies (70 hr) and Diploma of Yoga Teacher Training (460 hr). [iyta.com.au](http://iyta.com.au)

## september

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### Learn to Meditate & Digital Detox Weekend With Tory Abraham

Bundanoon September 6-8

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### Decadent Deserts - Raw Vegan Cooking Class

Brisbane September 7

This raw vegan cooking class is a deliciously sweet demonstration that will cover the secrets of raw vegan dessert techniques, teaching you how to make spectacular and nutritious treats without white sugar, flour, gluten, eggs, or dairy. Great for people with gluten or dairy allergies and special diet. [asmy.org.au](http://asmy.org.au) Cost \$49

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### Chakra Balancing Yoga + Healing Workshop

Melbourne September 8

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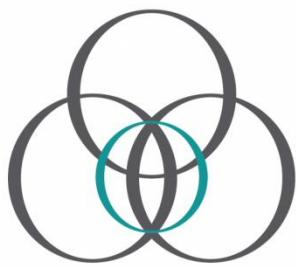
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# WHOLEFOODS FOR HEALTH

Although it certainly seems like common sense, and we can feel the positive effects of a whole food diet, there hasn't been a whole lot of research to support eating a diet low in processed foods – until now. Two recent studies in the *British Medical Journal* illustrated the negative impact of incorporating highly processed foods into your daily diet. One showed that a higher consumption of processed foods was linked to cardiovascular, coronary heart and cerebrovascular disease, and the other illustrated that more than four servings of processed foods daily increases mortality by 62% - and this increases even more with additional servings. In case you needed yet another excuse to stock your pantry with wholesome, yogic goodness! For the full studies head to [www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)

## INFLAMMATION & IMMUNITY



Research indicates that inflammation increases over winter, and one of the best ways to combat this is through diet. The best inflammation fighting foods include tomatoes, olive oil, dark leafy veggies, fatty fish and fruits. Hello Mediterranean inspired meals!



## GET OUT OF A WINTER RUT WITH A HEALTHY GUT

A recent study published in *PLOS Genetics* found that fermented foods can boost the immune system by activating immune cells when good bacteria (aka probiotics) is detected. Food swarming with all the goodies include yogurt, sauerkraut, miso, tempeh and kombucha. They also happen to be delicious! For science lovers, see the full study at [www.journals.plos.org](http://www.journals.plos.org) and look for the paper titled 'Metabolites of lactic acid bacteria present in fermented foods are highly potent agonists of human hydroxycarboxylic acid receptor 3'



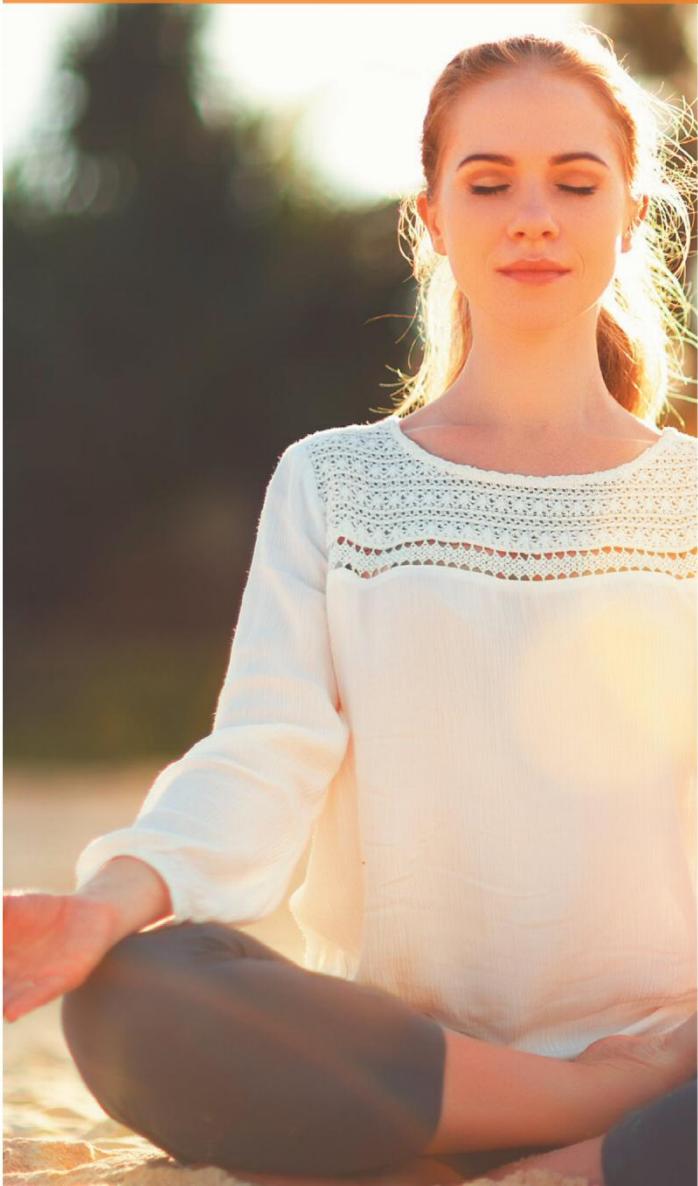
## EASE CROHN'S WITH A PLANT-BASED APPROACH

Ongoing research indicates that a plant-based diet rich in whole foods could be the answer for Crohn's sufferers. Crohn's Disease, or CD, causes chronic inflammation of the intestinal tract resulting in abdominal pain, bloating, nausea and ulcers. A recent report published in *Nutrients* demonstrated that a plant-based diet high in fibre may be the solution. The report outlines the case of a young man who was able to achieve full remission by eliminating all animal products and processed food from his diet. It is believed that the high fibre component of plant-based diets contributes to overall gut health by feeding healthy bacteria and providing relief from digestive ailments.

Look for

*Crohn's Disease Remission with a Plant-Based Diet: A Case Report* at [www.mdpi.com](http://www.mdpi.com) for all the details.

### Meditation is as good as a holiday



Good news for office workers – the next time you feel the 3pm slump creeping up, try a power meditation. Apparently, it's as good as a holiday (and a lot cheaper!). According to the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, meditation gives you the same levels of wellbeing and increased mindfulness as a one-day vacay. During the eight-week study, participants meditated some days, and completed a daily survey each evening, that assessed their wellbeing, emotions and mindfulness.

On the days that participants meditated, they reported lower levels of negative emotions like irritation, and higher levels of positive ones such as gratitude. Their levels of mindfulness also improved on the meditation days, with heightened experiences of senses and awareness of feelings without getting caught up in them. These same effects were observed on days they took a holiday. The difference is that only 15 minutes of meditation was required and they didn't even need to leave the room! See [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com) and search for *The relative impact of 15-minutes of meditation compared to a day of vacation in daily life: An exploratory analysis*.



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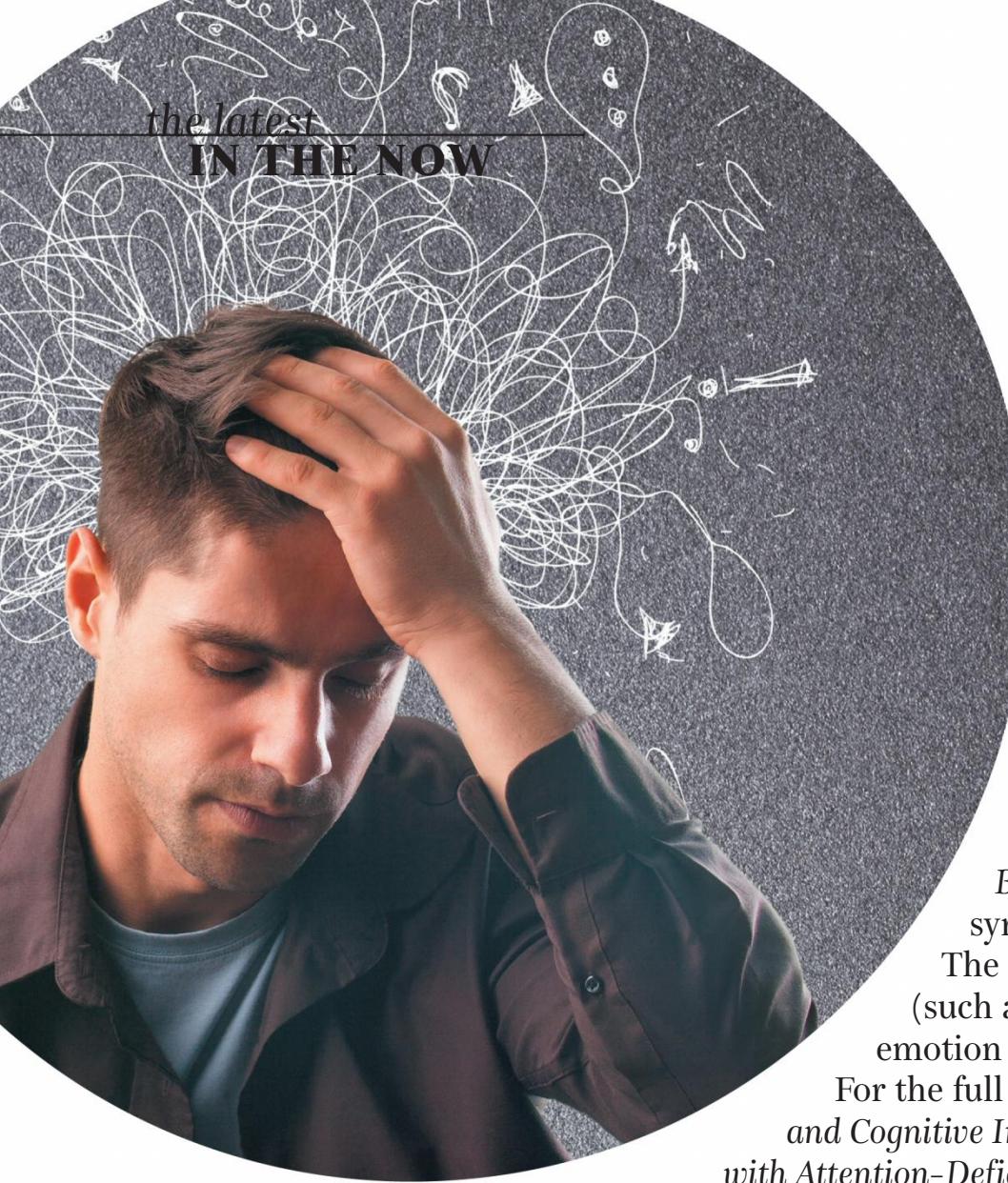
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## MINDFULNESS IS KEY FOR ADULTS WITH ADHD

A recent study collectively examined 13 quality studies of mindfulness-based interventions for the treatment of ADHD and discovered that the practice is, indeed, extremely helpful in calming chaotic minds.

The study, which looked at over 700 participants with an average age of 35 and was published in the journal *Behavioural Neurology*, concluded that 100% of participants' symptoms improved with mindfulness meditation training.

The practice also improved aspects of executive function (such as paying attention, staying focused and planning) and emotion dysregulation (inability to regulate one's emotions).

For the full study, check out [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) - *Behavioral and Cognitive Impacts of Mindfulness-Based Interventions on Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Systematic Review*.



## HAPPINESS IS BELIEVING WE ARE ALL ONE

A recent German study, published in *Psychology of Spirituality and Religion* looked at how a belief in "oneness" – regardless of religion, can increase overall happiness and life satisfaction. The study's author, Laura Marie Edinger-Schons, is herself a big fan of yoga, meditation, surfing and activities that invite this sense of being in the flow, immersed, or deeply connected to nature. So she sought to discover if this sense of one-ness is related to overall life satisfaction. The study looked at over 70,000 people from many different walks of life, and concluded that people believing in one-ness are more likely to be satisfied with their lives. Women were more inclined to have a sense of one-ness than men, as were people with middle to high incomes compared to the very rich or poor. Interestingly, this sense of one-ness tends to increase with age, with its peak being between 80 and 89 years.

For the full, 12 page PDF study, go to [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org) and look for *Oneness Beliefs and Their Effect on Life Satisfaction*.

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## ANOTHER EXCUSE TO ESCAPE THE SCREEN

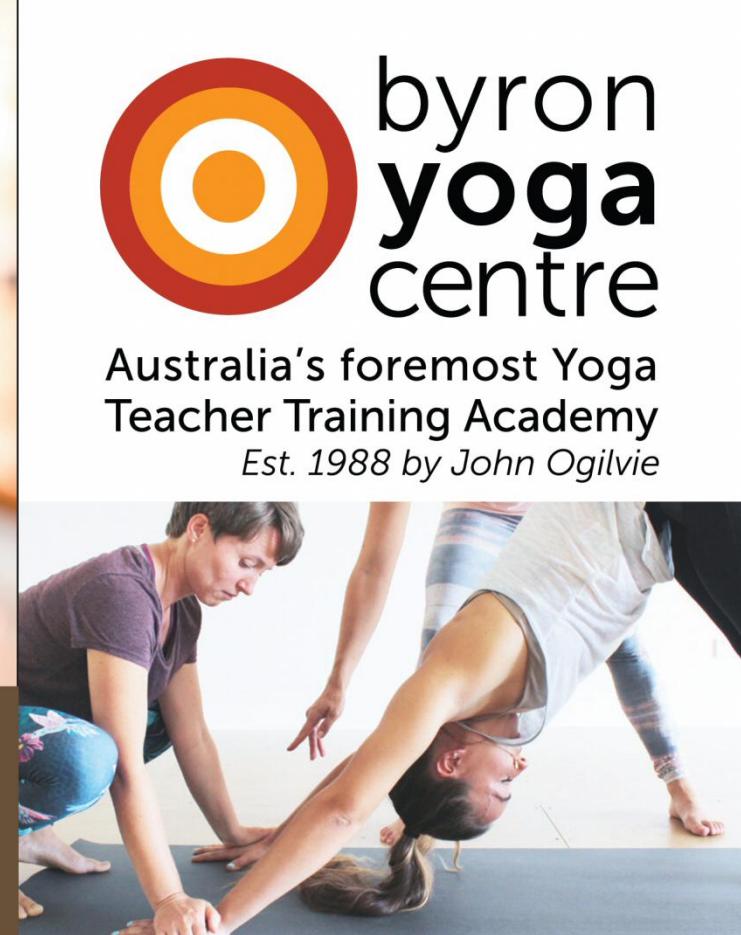
A new study has found that phone use may lead to bone spurs – horn-like growths at the back of the skull that result from repeatedly tipping your head forward on a small-screened device. Yes – you read that correctly. People are growing horns on the back of their heads. Eek! Apparently they are more prevalent in young people (aka the tech generation). When you tilt your head forward to use your phone, the way that weight is distributed on the spine is altered. Weight moves from the spine to the muscles at the back of the head, causing unusual bone formations. Over time, the spurs, which are simply an indication of a greater problem with the spine, can lead to chronic pain. The good news? Yoga can help to prevent the spurs from developing (as can less time on your phone!). See the full study, titled *Prominent exostosis projecting from the occipital squama more substantial and prevalent in young adult than older age groups* at [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com)



providing a space for comprehensive healing – through a variety of different modalities, both conventional and alternative. She says, "I wanted to create a haven for patients where they could receive all the treatment they needed to regain health – offering medical, psychological, nutritional, herbal and physical support." The lodge aims not only to offer a smorgasbord of modalities, but also to have them work collaboratively, so clients can choose to combine any two treatments to create holistic healing. Common combined consultations include doctor and naturopath, naturopath and chiropractor and psychologist and doctor. See [www.thehealthlodge.com.au](http://www.thehealthlodge.com.au) to explore.

## East meets West for holistic healing

It's so inspiring to see Eastern and Western practices being used in harmony to create healing. Where in the past we've seen debate and conflict, we are slowly beginning to see integration and cooperation. The Health Lodge in Byron Bay is a perfect example of this. Founder Reine DuBois created the lodge with the intention of

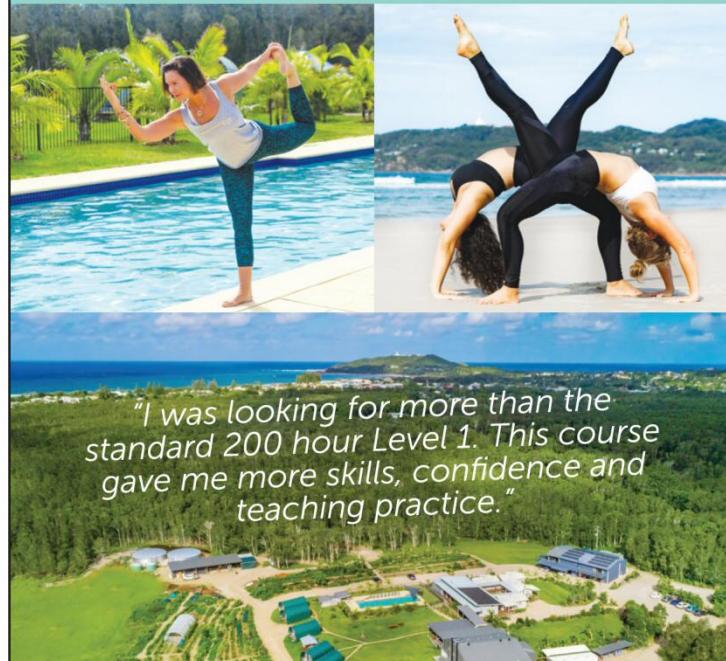


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# *Yoga adjustments AND MENTAL HEALTH*

## *Did you know?*

- Nearly half the population will experience mental illness in their lifetime
- More than half of yoga students start yoga for mental health reasons
- More than ¾ of yoga students continue yoga for the mental health benefits

The need for trauma and mental health awareness within the yoga studio has been a big topic of conversation within the yoga community of late. Where once adjustments were accepted (often reluctantly) as part of class, teachers are now becoming aware of the need to ask permission in order to create a safe and comfortable environment for their students.

Psychologist and yoga teacher Dr Lauren Tober explains that for students with a history of trauma, especially sexual trauma, having a teacher touch them in class may be triggering. Some days students will be uncomfortable receiving adjustments, whereas other days hands-on assists may be welcomed.

To promote conversations about touch and empower students on the mat, Tober has created these funky little consent tokens for students to place next to their mat and communicate their preferences with clarity and ease. Tober also offers courses for yoga teachers to improve their mental health awareness in the studio. For all the details, head to [www.mentalhealthawareyoga.com](http://www.mentalhealthawareyoga.com)



## *Heartache in the yoga community*

The yoga community has responded to the recent news of Maty Ezraty's passing with deep sadness. An inspiration to so many, 55 year old Maty was a pioneer in the yoga community and travelled the world to share her wisdom. She began teaching in 1985, and in 1987, at just 23 years old, opened the popular YogaWorks in the United States – a studio that has been hugely instrumental in shaping yoga, as we know it today. Her teaching was steeped in many years of dedicated practice and she was known for her holistic and joyful approach to yoga and a deep wisdom that had so many students flocking to her offerings.



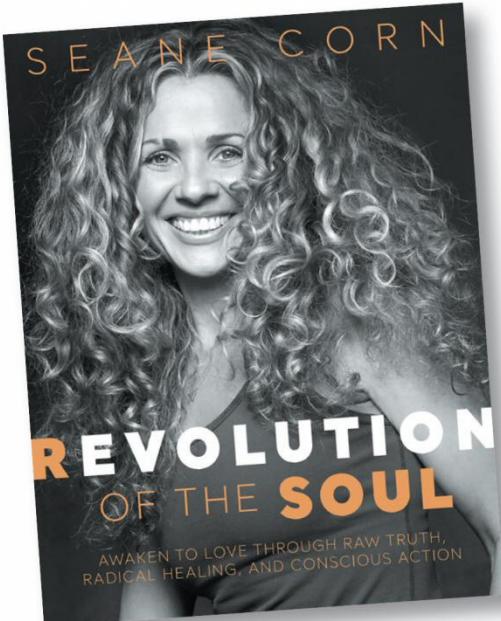
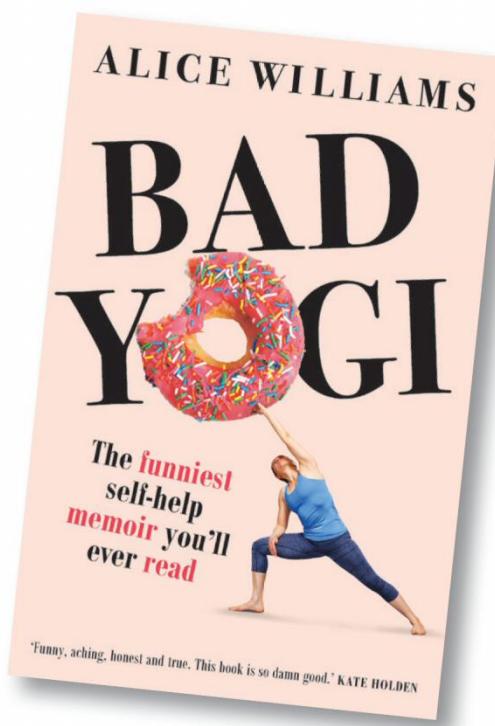
A regular contributor to *Yoga Journal*, Maty inspired with her intelligence, honesty and warm heart. In a recent *Yoga Journal* interview that explored the state of yoga today, Maty said, "It disturbs me when I see people taking pictures of themselves doing yoga at the beach. It worries me. I could go outside right now—it's beautiful here in Hawaii—and I could walk on my land and pretend that my life is perfect. But in reality, I'm human—and I have all kinds of things going on that are not perfect. I could use my environment to completely create something that's not real and to hook people in a way that makes them feel like their life is not as good. It's a fantasy, and that's what worries me. Instead, people need to get off their asses and study yoga." Hear hear! Thank you for your generous contribution to the yoga world beautiful Maty. You will be dearly missed by so many.

## MUST-READ MEMOIRS

### BOOK:

#### *Bad Yogi*

This recently released, funny and engaging memoir by Alice Williams is a page-turning concoction of take-the-piss humour, genuine enquiry into yogic philosophy and a personal story of eating disorder recovery. Alice tells the story of joining a 12-step food addiction program then embarking on a yoga-teaching journey in an attempt to become more zen. In the process, she becomes her own kind of enlightened. Affirm Press. **\$29.99**



### BOOK:

#### *Revolution of the Soul*

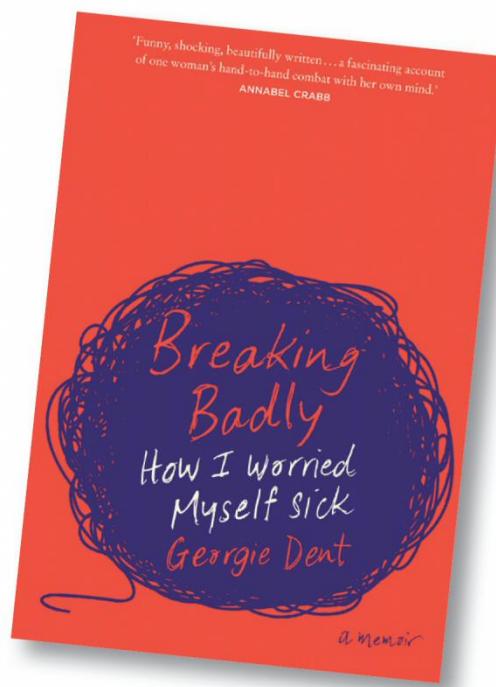
Scheduled for release on the 3rd of September, much loved yogi activist Seane Corn's memoir guides readers through a modern journey of healing through yoga. She shares her own yoga evolution, including the process of understanding the important connection between yoga and service through activism – sprinkled with wisdom for truly walking your talk as a yogi and understanding that change begins with you.

[www.seanecorn.com](http://www.seanecorn.com)

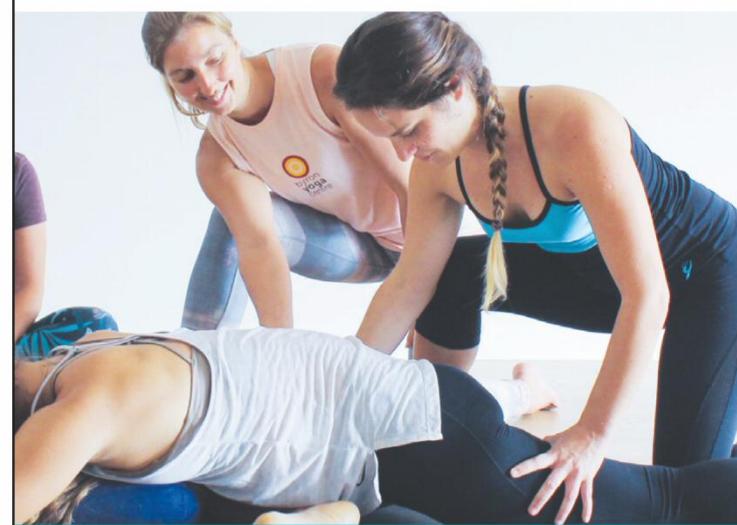
### BOOK:

#### *Breaking Badly*

Georgie Dent's first novel is an intimate account of her nervous breakdown in slow motion, and how she learned to breathe. At 24, Georgie was working her dream job at a Sydney law firm before she began suffering physical symptoms that made simple tasks impossible. Within a year she was unemployed, living at home with her parents and suffering crippling anxiety that landed her in a psychiatric ward. This is the story of her journey to healing – from constant negative self-talk to hope and, eventually, change. Affirm Press. **\$29.99**



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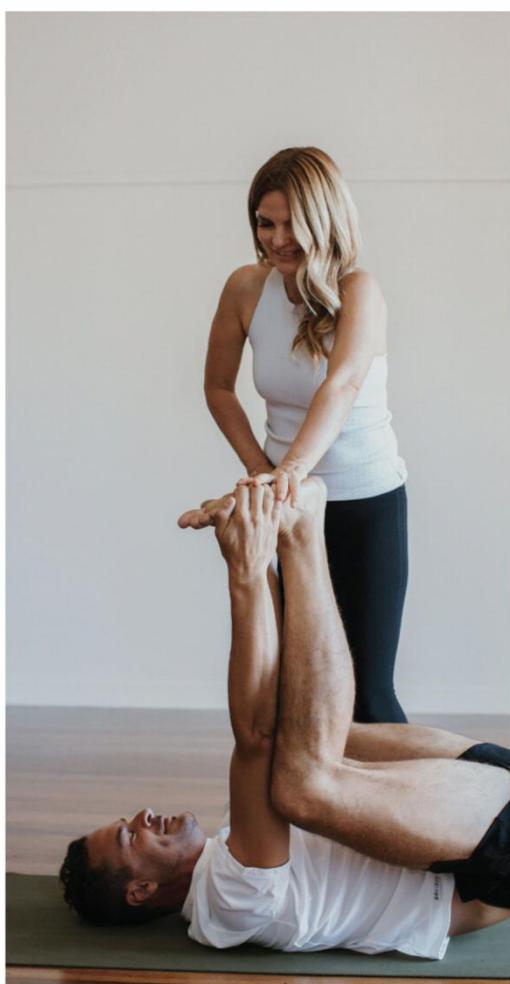
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# The Sound of HEALING

Sound therapy is yoga's perfect partner writes **Miranda Munro**

**YOGA AND SOUND HEALING** are deeply rooted in antiquity, dating back 10,000 years or perhaps more. Originally used by Rishis, Shamans and priests they were both sacred practices employed to bring balance to mind, body and spirit. Sound healing and yoga are intimately connected by the sounding of "bija", the mystical "seed syllables" contained within mantras.

In India, mantra in both yoga and meditation were practised to help align the energy systems of the body and quiet the mind. Today yoga and sound therapy are still bound together by the adept use of mantra.

Sound therapy, although once an integral part of healing in the ancient world—used by Pythagoras, the Babylonians and the Egyptians—for the most part disappeared from the Western world until early last century.

In the 1930s, with the discovery of the medical uses of the ultrasound, acousitcs as therapy began to generate interest once again. Over the last couple of decades that curiosity in the power of sound as a healing agent has blossomed and is now emerging as a profound method of re-aligning and balancing our entire being.

Modern sound therapy encompasses both vocal sounding and the vibrational frequency of certain instruments. Himalayan singing bowls and gongs possess the innate ability to place the brain into a theta state of brainwave activity, equivalent to the state achieved through meditation. In fact for those that find it difficult to still their mind, sound therapy will help immensely.

Quantum physics maintains that we are vibrating beings in a sea of perpetual vibration and patterns of

frequency. This may go some way to explaining why sound affects our beings so profoundly. Research has demonstrated that the focused use of acousites in the correct and measured dose can have a multitude of therapeutic benefits. For example, healing long-standing physical issues, the resolution of emotional problems, and sound has the ability to establish a lasting peace of mind. Deepak Chopra has says, "The body is held together by sound. The presence of disease indicates some sounds have gone out of tune".

Sound therapy is used on a personal level in a private one-on-one session and in groups in a form of mediation often referred to as a sound bath.

Sound Therapy and yoga are synergistically perfect partners and together they have the ability to reach and balance every part of our being.

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# Sensational CBD

Why yogis are jumping on board the Cannabidiol bandwagon.

By Jess Humphries

**RECENTLY, WHILE FLICKING THROUGH INSTAGRAM, I saw Yoga Girl's story—a picture of a vaporiser and a caption expressing her enthusiasm for CBD**

(CannaBiDiol). If there was anything that solidified the yoga community's growing interest in cannabis as a healing aid, this was it. At the same



time, she released a podcast episode titled 'What if we all just did whatever the fuck we want?' where she discusses CBD oil and how ingesting it through a vaporising pen has had incredible benefits for her asthma.

Beyond that, there are yogis near and far who are boasting the benefits of cannabis for mental and physical health. Instagram yogis @trippytreez, @karma\_stoned and @yogaandweed are just some of Insta-yogis promoting cannabis as the perfect yoga companion. These yogis share images of toking whilst striking a pose and promote yoga classes that combine the two. The benefits? Heightened sensory awareness, improved ease of movement and a deeper sense of connection —for a start.

In Australia the legalities around marijuana consumption mean that most of these practices are off-limits for us. But one way that alternative health enthusiasts are accessing the potential of this super-plant is through CBD oil.

#### CANNABIS, MARIJUANA, HEMP & CBD: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Hemp products (like hemp seeds, oil and materials) are extracted from hemp, and CBD oil is extracted from marijuana. The THC (psychoactive compound of the plant) is removed from both hemp seed oil and CBD oil. But because hemp seed oil contains little to no CBD, the benefits of CBD cannot be accessed via hemp oil. However, CBD oil (obviously) contains CBD, and therefore its users can reap the benefits of this particular compound.

Put simply, CBD oil and hemp seed oil will not get you stoned! And, while

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"Put simply, CBD oil and hemp seed oil will not get you stoned! And, while hemp seed oil has some wonderful benefits, CBD oil is next level."

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hemp seed oil has some wonderful benefits, CBD oil is next level.

Despite CBD oil's low levels of THC, and hence no psychoactive effects, it is still illegal to take internally in Australia. So, when CBD oil is sold here, it is sold as a topical product, not to be ingested.

#### CELEBRATING CBD: THE BENEFITS

It's only recently that researchers have been investing energy into exploring CBD oil. One current study, headed by a Harvard professor, is looking at the potential for CBD oil to relieve women of menstrual pain and discomfort.

Research from 2014 indicated that CBD has a positive interaction with serotonin receptors in the brain, which may be useful in treating depression. Current studies are looking at CBD oil's impact on everything from acne to sleep apnoea, and research is even going into how CBD can support cancer patients. Of course it's early days yet, but there's at least been a big swing of the pendulum from viewing marijuana and all of its components as terrifying drugs to something that potentially benefits your health.

#### WHY THE YOGIS ARE LOVING CBD

While the research is still growing, there's so much anecdotal evidence to support the benefits of CBD oil. Yoga

girl credits CBD to not needing to use her asthma inhaler anymore. Jolie Parcher, a New York based yoga teacher and studio owner explains that CBD "helps to quiet that 'drunken monkey mind'" as well as provide relief for aches and pains and allow students to move more freely due to its anti-inflammatory properties. There's even a yoga teacher in southern California who calls herself 'The CBD Yoga Teacher' who has experienced extraordinary relief through the use of the oil and so integrates it into her classes. She says, "CBD has by far out performed any and every anxiety/PTSD medication I have ever tried."

#### RESEARCH-BACKED BENEFITS OF CBD OIL

While we shouldn't accept CBD as a cure-all, studies have and continue to support its healing properties. Research has indicated that CBD can help with the relief of:

- Inflammation and pain
- Depression and anxiety
- Nausea and vomiting
- Epilepsy and seizures
- Diabetes



# The Yoga Teacher Supplement Guide

Holding space, assisting, and maintaining a practice can keep yoga teachers in constant motion. Here, five professionals fill us in on the herbs and formulas that keep them feeling great, even on their busiest days.

By YJ Staff



## SPIRULINA

Rich in iron, protein, and B-12, spirulina has earned a glittering reputation among yoga teachers for boosting immune systems and aiding in detoxification.

### RECOMMENDED BY: TIAS LITTLE

*Founder, Prana Yoga*

"I take it in powder-form first thing in the morning, an hour prior to my yoga practice. Not only is it hydrating, but I feel light and clear. Spirulina brings a buoyant quality to my tissues."

### YJ RECOMMENDS:

Australian Spirulina tablets, \$22, [australianspirulina.com.au](http://australianspirulina.com.au)

## ASHWAGANDHA

This herb's inflammatory-reducing super power is attributed to its high concentration of withanolides —naturally occurring steroids that combat stress and boost strength.

### RECOMMENDED BY: SARAH PLATT-FINGER

*Co-Founder, ISHTA Yoga*

"I've found that by taking Ashwaganda daily, my focus is better and I feel positive effects in my yoga and meditation practice. I'm more able to slow down my breath and sit for extended periods without distraction."

### YJ RECOMMENDS:

BareOrganics Ashwaganda, \$28, [www.biovea.net](http://www.biovea.net)

## PROTEIN & GREENS

Research suggests that a blend of pea and rice protein can provide optimal levels of B vitamins. Great news if you are gluten-, meat-, or dairy-free.

### RECOMMENDED BY: TIFFANY CRUIKSHANK

*Founder, Yoga Medicine*

"This combo keeps my blood sugar steady through even a longer practice. I've used it for the past 12 years to support my energy levels while travelling. I attribute a lot of my health on the road to this mix."

### YJ RECOMMENDS:

Nature's Way Natural Protein Super Greens, \$24.99, [www.naturesway.com.au](http://www.naturesway.com.au)

## MAGNESIUM

Magnesium helps the body turn food into energy and fights off inflammation. It also helps sleep. It's estimated 80% of adults lack the proper intake of magnesium.

### RECOMMENDED BY: NICOLE WALSH

*Founder, InYoga*

"I take a daily dose of Magnesium. When I take it in the evening I find I have a better night's sleep and wake up feeling more rested. It's also a great immune booster."

## MORINGA

Moringa is a Northern Indian herb rich in many important nutrients, including vitamin B6, vitamin C, riboflavin and iron and can boost the immune system as well as reduce chronic inflammation.

### RECOMMENDED BY: JOHN OGILVIE

*Founder, Byron Yoga Centre*

"I started taking it to assist in healing from a bronchial infection and now, as a vegetarian, I find it useful to boost iron levels and maintain a healthy immune system."

### YJ RECOMMENDS:

TrueProtein Moringa 250g, \$15, [trueprotein.com.au](http://trueprotein.com.au)





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# Ayurvedic BLISS

What really happens when you eat according to the seasons and down ghee straight from the jar every morning?

Yoga Journal's **Samantha Trueheart**, reports.

I DIPPED A TEASPOON into an oversized jar of grass-fed, organic ghee and filled it to the brim, just as I was instructed. Yet as I held it to my mouth and caught a whiff of the pungent, good-for-me fat, I had a strong urge to abandon this Ayurvedic cleanse, stat. Why was I about to toss this ghee down my hatch? I'd turned to an Ayurvedic doctor for help with my digestive woes, hormonal acne, and

weeks-long exhaustion. But now, downing a teaspoon of clarified butter every morning seemed extreme. Would it really help me feel better? There was only one way to find out: I squeezed my eyes shut, held my nose, and swallowed the congealed fat, shivering a little as it liquified in my mouth.

I consider myself a healthy, physically fit, 26-year-old woman and

I'm grateful for the body I'm in and lifestyle I live. However, since I was a teenager, I've suffered from irritable bowel syndrome, painful menstrual cramps, and acne. After the implantation of my hormonal IUD a couple years ago, I noticed an increase in my symptoms. Worse, I was feeling anxious, exhausted, and stressed almost all the time, and I found myself in a yoga slump.

The creative vinyasa home practices I usually enjoyed seemed boring, and my monkey mind was on overdrive. I didn't feel like my happy go-lucky, inspired self anymore. So, I reached out to John Douillard, a globally-recognised Ayurvedic doctor and he recommended I follow an Ayurvedic diet for a month.

Douillard prescribed nutritional changes, herbs, and yoga poses he believed would help balance my body and mitigate my symptoms. For the first week, I would complete his short four-day home cleanse regimen. The rest of the month I would eat seasonally, take some supplements (specifically formulas for digestion, liver repair, and stress, along with turmeric, neem, and a probiotic), and make a homemade beetroot, apple, and celery juice every morning. Douillard also told me that daily Sun Salutations and backbends would help open my abdomen to get my sluggish digestion going.

I was nervous about starting; I'd heard cleanses could be dangerous if taken to the extreme. Even more concerning was my tendency to get "hangry." However, Douillard assured me this safe cleanse would allow me to satisfy my hunger with veggies, fruits, and even chicken if needed. For four days, I cooked and ate only non-fat kitchari with seasonal vegetables, took my herbs, and gulped back a teaspoon of ghee every morning. On day three, I caved and had a hundred grams of grilled chicken.

I won't lie—the first two days were difficult. Intense sugar cravings consumed my thoughts, I felt even more fatigued than usual, and my digestive woes remained. I took a restorative yoga class to try to take the edge off, and the teacher explained that according to Chinese medicine, the liver holds anger.

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## “The teacher explained that according to Chinese medicine, the liver holds anger...”

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Anger was rising up in me throughout this cleanse. Old memories, resentments and fears surfaced. But at the same time, I felt a sense of calm—like these emotions weren’t attached to me anymore. I was encouraged enough to keep going and stopped holding my nose as I swallowed my teaspoon of ghee.

Another key to this new dietary plan was eating dinner at 5:30 p.m. every day, which would give my digestive system a break until the next morning. I noticed by doing an intermittent fast, I woke up with more energy and enthusiasm. Before the cleanse, I would hit snooze several times and then immediately pick up my phone and scroll through social media until I felt awake. By the fourth day, I practically jumped out of bed and rolled out my yoga mat, eager to practice an hour of yoga and meditate for 20 minutes before leaving for the office.

By the end of the first week, I felt like a fog had been lifted. I felt like I had been brought back to life.

During my second week of Ayurvedic eating, Douillard put me on a kapha-balancing diet which involved avoiding gluten and dairy and loading up on bitter greens like dandelion, endive, and swiss chard.

The boost in energy, contentment, and gratitude I got early on continued. I began taking our office yoga classes every day and got back into running. This lifestyle change brought me closer to my boyfriend; as my energy rose, so did my libido.

Another bright spot? As I started really listening to my body, I began to feel more in tune with what it actually needed. I stopped using food as stress relief and started using it as a means to fuel me. The Sun Salutations and backbends were opening up my chest and loosening my stomach.

I wasn’t seeing much improvement with my acne, but the drastic difference in my digestion made up for it: I found myself getting on a consistent elimination schedule, and the gas, bloating, and constipation I constantly suffered from in the past disappeared.

During the last week of my diet, I was excited to introduce foods I had restricted over the last month. I noticed I was more sensitive to gluten, alcohol, and sweets. I was having intense cravings for avocado—a food that would previously give me an upset stomach—and could suddenly eat this healthy, fat-filled food with no issues. Douillard told me the cleanse and diet changes helped my liver and digestive tract reset. It’s also why I saw a staggering boost in my energy and mood.

Even though my month of Ayurvedic eating is over, I’m mostly sticking to the principles I picked up. This cleanse helped me connect with my body, gut, and mind in a new way. I now strive to eat whole, clean ingredients, and locally sourced foods as much as possible—to feel healthy, but also to feel grounded and present in my body. I’ll reset every year with the cleanse. And maybe, just maybe, I’ll even take a ghee shooter every now and then.

## AT A GLANCE

### WHAT IS AYURVEDA?

Often translated as “the science of life,” Ayurveda is a holistic healthcare system that originated in India thousands of years ago.

### WHERE YOU CAN TRY IT

[oneworldayurveda.com](http://oneworldayurveda.com)  
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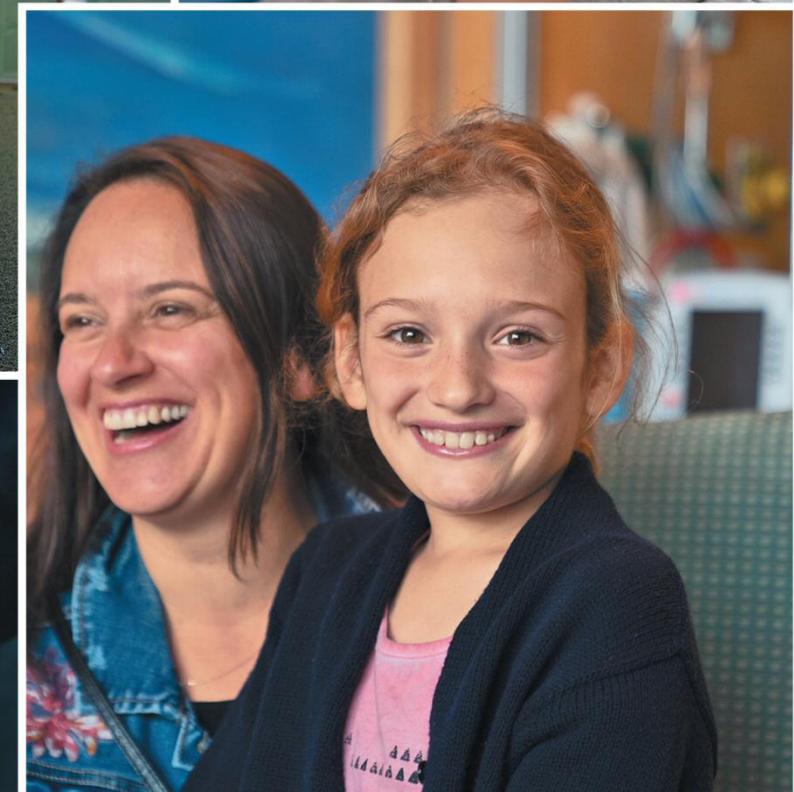
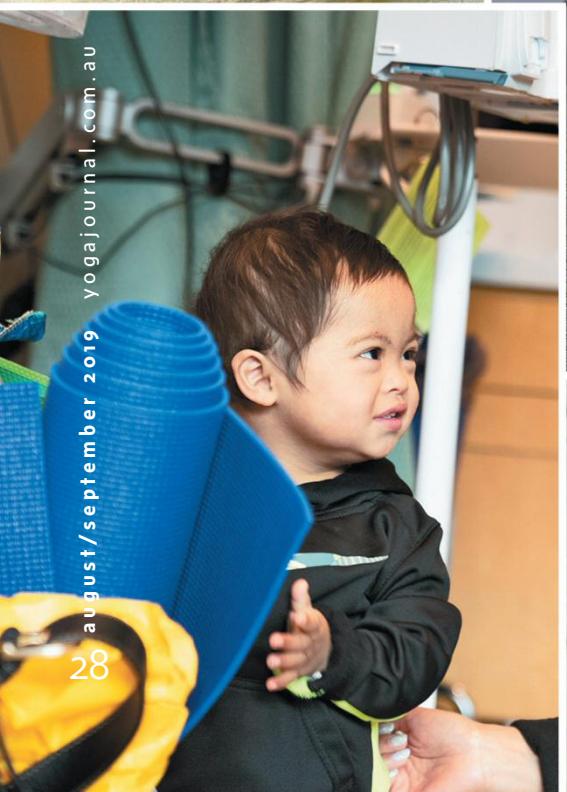
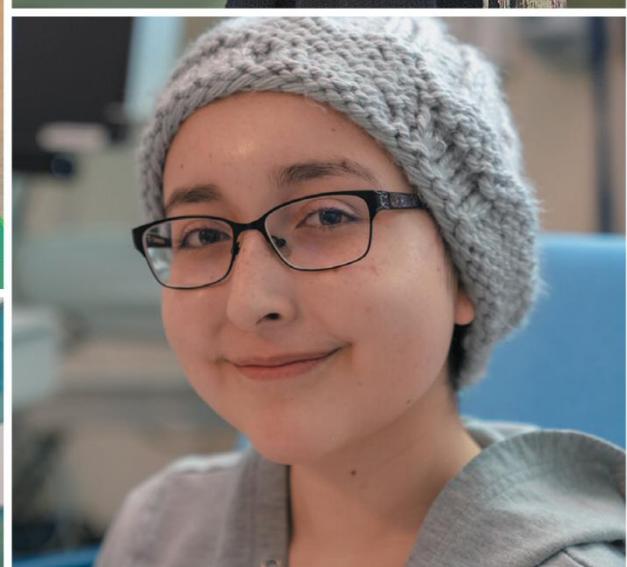
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# CONQUERING cancer

By Lindsay Tucker

A volunteer yoga program at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego is bettering the lives of its oncology kids.

## THE CORNFLOWER-BLUE SLEEPER SOFA.

The Formica closet. The tea cart clanking by. Jaymee Jiao will never forget the eight months she spent living in this hospital room with her son Saviour-Makani

Jiao as he underwent around-the-clock treatment for acute myeloid leukemia. But today, the rambunctious two-and-a-half-year-old is in remission, and he's arrived at his former bedroom at San Diego's Rady Children's Hospital in a red plastic Radio Flyer. "I had to buckle him in because he was going crazy downstairs," Jiao says when we meet, exhaling. It's true: right now, Saviour's energy could fuel a turbine. The familiar nurses who pass by gush over his vivacity and thick, wavy tuft of black hair. You'd never guess that just last year he was undergoing chemotherapy full time.

Five months post-discharge, Jiao is settling into life back at home with her husband and four children, of whom Saviour is the youngest. She is visibly tired, yet cheerful. Atop her left shoulder is a large, tight lump, and she points it out, pulling on it as if it might loosen and slip off. "I carry my stress physically," she says with a shrug.

Also in Saviour's old hospital room is volunteer yoga teacher Liz Fautsch, a smiling brunette who worked weekly with Jiao to ease tension and stress while she was holed up at Rady. "Your shoulder is looking better!" Fautsch encourages. Jiao nods. "Yoga helped relieve my shoulder and back pain," she

tells me. "And," she says, lowering her voice a little, "it would take my mind off things when we were having a bad day." But between school drop-offs and shuttling her kids to sports practice and chasing Saviour around the house, Jiao admittedly hasn't kept up a regular yoga routine since she lived in this room.

The yoga program for cancer patients and their families here at Rady is powered by volunteers from the Sean O'Shea Foundation—a non-profit organisation that aims to empower youth through yoga, mindfulness, and optimistic teachings. It was founded by Gloria O'Shea to honour her late son Sean, a children's yoga teacher who died in a fluke car crash in 2006. He was 32. While the foundation has been running programs for San Diego kids and teens since 2008, it partnered with Rady in 2011 to harness the research-backed benefits of yoga for kids undergoing cancer treatment and their families. Volunteer yoga teachers such as Fautsch, many of whom are health care professionals and specialise in yoga for cancer recovery, visit the hospital's oncology unit three days a week, going bed to bed to offer individualised sessions to whoever's in the room—be it patients, parents, or friendly visitors. Sessions typically last about 30 minutes and range from pranayama and meditation in bed to asana on colourful mats carried in on carts by volunteers.

"When the yoga instructors would come by, my eyes would blink little hearts," says Jessica Davidson, whose

10-year-old daughter, Julia Davidson, spent two years at Rady battling stage four neuroblastoma. Today, after undergoing surgical tumour removal and six rounds of frontline chemotherapy followed by immunotherapy—plus plenty of yoga and bedside dance parties ('80s and '90s music were the jams)—Julia is precocious and thriving in remission. She still dances and practices yoga regularly, and tells me, "It's really calming and good for the human body, so I recommend it."

Chemotherapy and other cancer treatments like radiation are notoriously volatile and can slow growth in children. The most common side effects apart from hair loss include nausea and vomiting, trouble breathing, nerve damage (neuropathy), and a weakened immune system. While a growing body of research from the past two decades supports yoga's ability to reduce symptoms and stress and improve mood and overall quality of life in cancer patients, yoga and physical therapist Kelli Bethel, the director of yoga therapy at the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Centre for Integrative Medicine, says customised practices tailored to each patient, like those at Rady, work best in real-life scenarios. In a health-research setting, however, proving yoga's absolute potential through standardised clinical trials is nearly impossible: "Everyone's cancer journey is different and their needs and symptoms vary," she says. "It's one thing to understand which

**PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY**

nurse practitioner  
Jeanie Spies plays  
with former patient  
Savior-Makani Jiao.



# Just Breathe

Try *Sama Vritti Pranayama* (Box Breathing) when you're stressed, anxious, or upset.

Sama Vritti Pranayama is a powerful relaxation tool that can help clear your mind, relax your body, and allow you to focus. The best part? You can do it anywhere. Just find a comfortable seat with your back supported and feet on the floor.

1. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose, slowly counting to 4. Feel the air filling your lungs.
2. Hold your breath here and slowly count to 4 again. Try not to clamp your airways shut. Simply avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 counts.
3. Slowly exhale to the count of 4.
4. Hold the exhale for another 4 counts.
5. Repeat steps 1–4 for 4 minutes or until you feel calm and centred.



methods of yoga apply to cancer patients, but having everyone follow a script—this pose, this exercise—that will never accurately demonstrate the full benefits."

Paediatric research is also hard to come by, but according to a 2019 clinical feasibility study that examined the impact of yoga on paediatric outpatients receiving chemotherapy, the results of two recent pilot studies show that individualised yoga programs improved quality of life for adolescents receiving cancer treatment. Ultimately, the authors called for further investigation. To date, much of the evidence for yoga's treatment benefits comes from breast cancer clinical trials, says Bethel.

To that end, Julia Fukuhara was working as a nurse and volunteer yoga instructor at Rady in 2013 when she realised her unique potential as a data collector. "We have some research that shows how imperative integrative medicine is for adults and for kids, but to actually see it frontline was mind blowing," she says. Kids could sleep better afterward. They were less anxious. Oftentimes they required less pain- or anti-nausea medication.

When making their yoga rounds, Fukuhara and the other teachers on the ward kept detailed notebooks with dated entries describing patient conditions, applied yoga exercises, and outcomes. "We already had all this documentation in place, so we thought, let's see if we can numerically capture this data with some kind of pain, anxiety, and quality-of-life measure," she says. What ensued was a six-month study of 32 kids and their families who were surveyed before and after yoga sessions. The results will hopefully be published in the coming months, and Fukuhara is excited to report that she saw significant positive change.

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Common chemo drugs are known to depress the nervous system, says Fukuhara. For the kids she worked with at Rady, this often manifested as trouble breathing, balancing, and focusing—and eventually irreversible neuropathy and numbness in fingers and toes. During her study, which she co-authored with paediatric oncology nurse practitioner Jeanie Spies, Fukuhara found that stimulating power poses such as Virabhadrasanas (Warrior Poses) and Vrksasana (Tree Pose) fired up her patients' nerves, making them resistant to the negative side effects of their medications. "It's like we were enhancing the nervous system," she says.

Spies is the founder of the integrative medicine program at Rady and coordinator of the yoga initiative. Her warm red hair feels like an extension of her personality: She geeks out over things like bone marrow biopsies and witnessing a patient's first steps (she beamed recounting Saviour's as he bounced around the room). Spies says that what surprised her most was the profound effect the yoga sessions had on parents, like Jiao, who face sleepless nights marked by constant worry and interruptions from hospital staff. "We turn their lives upside down with the diagnosis of cancer," Spies says. "The beauty of the yoga here is that it gives them a sense of relaxation and control, even if it's only for 10 minutes."

Ping Cao has a petite, fragile-looking frame—but don't be fooled. The lines on her soft, worn face, like the glossy black hair she wears in a tight pixie cut, are evidence of her perseverance. The Chinese immigrant is a volunteer yoga teacher with the O'Shea Foundation who recently finished treatment for breast cancer. Yoga and, in particular, Sama Vritti Pranayama—a technique in which you breath and hold to counts of four (see page 29)—helped Cao mitigate fatigue and nausea while she was undergoing chemotherapy and radiation. The strength she's derived from the practice and from the support of other cancer survivors is what she says led her to start volunteering at Rady.

Research shows that yogic exercises as simple as pranayama (controlled breathing) can stimulate the immune system, and Cao begins most of her sessions in the paediatric oncology unit this way. Today she sits in a little teal chair beside 17-year old Aimee De Luna's hospital bed. Four weeks earlier, De Luna, a high school senior, was prom-dress shopping at the mall with her mom when she fainted in the checkout line. Her paediatrician suspected anaemia, but blood tests revealed leukemia. As an outpatient, she and her parents make the 1.5-hour drive from their home most days so Aimee can get chemotherapy. Today she smiles, eyes closed, sitting up still in her hospital gown, a grey beanie atop her head, as Cao guides her through a bedside meditation and stretching exercise. They've been practicing together like this for about three weeks now.

"The first time she asked me if I wanted to do it, I was a hard No,"



**AIMEE DE LUNA**  
practices yoga  
with breast cancer  
survivor Ping Cao  
during treatment.

“The beauty of the yoga here is that it gives them a sense of relaxation and control...”



JAYMEE JIAO with her son, Saviour-Makani Jiao in their former hospital room at Rady Children's in San Diego.

De Luna laughs. “But by the third time, I was feeling a lot better and was up for the challenge.” She likes Cao’s “relaxing vibe” and calls their sessions “a fun little escape from chemotherapy and needles and all that bad stuff.” She’s come to look forward to it—it’s relaxing, the stretching feels good, and she enjoys spending time with Cao, who not too long ago was in De Luna’s shoes.

“I’m in a unique position,” Cao says. “When I walk into a room, I can see it in the kids: They are in pain, or they are experiencing something uncomfortable from their treatment, or they are scared. And I can feel it in the parents, too. But I can say, ‘Here I am. I had the same experience. I felt all these difficulties physically, emotionally, too, and I did yoga. It helped. And today, I’m still surviving, and you will, too.’”

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# GET UP THE NERVE

By Tiffany Cruikshank

Your yoga practice can be a therapeutic tool for pain management and prevention.

Try this gentle sequence to target your nerves and protect their signalling powers.

**WITH ALL OF THE NEW AND EMERGING INFORMATION** on pain science, yoga students and teachers have the opportunity to apply modern research to their practices and help alleviate and prevent pain.

Preliminary research suggests that gentle movement of your nerves is vital to both managing pain and supporting the general health of your nervous system. The idea is that healthy nerves should be able to gently slide, elongate, and angulate within neural tissues (some nerves can move as much as 1.5cm) in order to adapt to different loads and minimise pressure that can worsen existing pain, alter sensation, or lead to new pain patterns. Sometimes, tone and tension around neural tissues can be a problem. These tissues are bloodthirsty and rely on an important pressure gradient around them to maintain adequate blood flow. So even small changes in tissue tension around a nerve can be enough to block nerve mobility and lead to compression that disrupts blood flow and nerve signalling back to the brain, contributing to pain.

To help you keep your nerves adaptable and protected, try the asana technique on the following pages based on an understanding of neurodynamics (the study of nerve movement through its surrounding tissues) and nerve pathways. We have the ability to alternately put tension on different ends of the nerve to create a movement of the nerve through the tissues, often referred to as nerve gliding. As you floss the nerve, you potentially allow it to move more freely so that it can communicate more efficiently with your brain. For example, the sciatic nerve runs through the back of your leg, so in Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose) if you bend your knee (raised leg) and flex your foot, you'll put tension on one end of the nerve (by your foot) and slack the other end (by your knee). This action draws the sciatic nerve and its branches toward your foot. Then, as you extend your knee and point your toes, you'll reverse the areas of tension and slack. This action draws the branches of the sciatic nerve toward your knee. When

you put these movements together you can encourage the sciatic nerve to move back and forth through its tissues more effortlessly. You also may down-regulate local inflammatory responses, restore healthy blood flow to the hard-working nerve, and encourage more efficient communication between your brain and body. Optimal signalling is crucial if you want your immune and nervous systems to function at their best, which is another reason to add nerve gliding to your repertoire.

The key to nerve gliding is to move gently within an easy range of motion. Since your target is the pain-free movement of your nerves, not of your muscles and fascia, you want very little sensation or stretch. It's a great reminder that even in the physical body there's clearly more to what we do than just sensations or the feel-good endorphins associated with them. Another thing

I love about this approach is that, in addition to being a safe way to work with pain, it's very accessible since it's about simple, gentle movements.

# SEQUENCE NEURODYNAMIC MOVEMENT

To begin, pick a nerve you want to focus on and find a range of motion that's accessible, pain-free, and with very little (if any) stretching sensation. Do 5–10 repetitions of the pose or this sequence once or twice a day. If you're using these moves more preventatively, try rotating a few of them into your regular practice a couple times a week, and remember that in group classes there's more than just stretch and sensation affecting the tissues. Happy flossing!

## 1. SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA

*Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose*

Not only is the sciatic nerve the largest and longest nerve in your body, it's also the most commonly irritated. Flossing this nerve is a great place to start and return to again and again. **A** Lie on your back with your right knee bent and your right foot flexed to move your sciatic nerve toward the end of your foot. **B** Then, extend your right knee (but there's no need to straighten it completely), and point your foot to move your sciatic nerve toward your spine. Find an easy, pain-free and stretch-free range of motion.

■ Repeat 5–10 times. Switch sides.



## 2. SPHINX POSE, VARIATION ►

**A** From Sphinx Pose, simply lift one leg off the ground as you look up. **B** Then, lower your leg as you tuck your chin. Find an easy range of motion to help rejuvenate the femoral nerve, which is important for the health of your mid-lower back (second to fourth lumbar vertebrae) and front hip.

■ Repeat 5–10 times. Then, switch sides.



### TARGET

**FEMORAL NERVE**  
Runs along the front of your hips and thighs.

## 3. MARJARYASANA–BITILASANA ▼

### *Cat-Cow Pose, variation*

Flexion of your spine puts more pressure on your spinal column and nerves, so for this pose you can use opposite movements of your cervical spine (neck) to create a more centralised flossing effect on your spinal cord. This one may feel strange if you're familiar with Cat-Cow Pose, but it's a great way to target the central nervous system. **A** As you come into Cat Pose, look up to take your neck into extension. **B** Then, move into Cow Pose as you tuck your chin to bring your neck into flexion. Find an easy range of motion.

■ Repeat 5–10 times. Then, switch sides.

### TARGET

#### SPINAL CORD

The tube of your central nervous system that extends from your brain stem to your lower back.

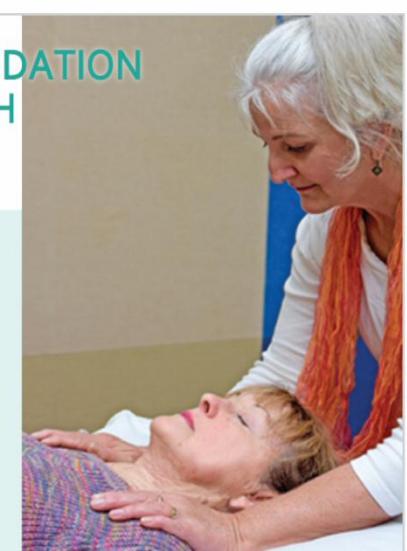


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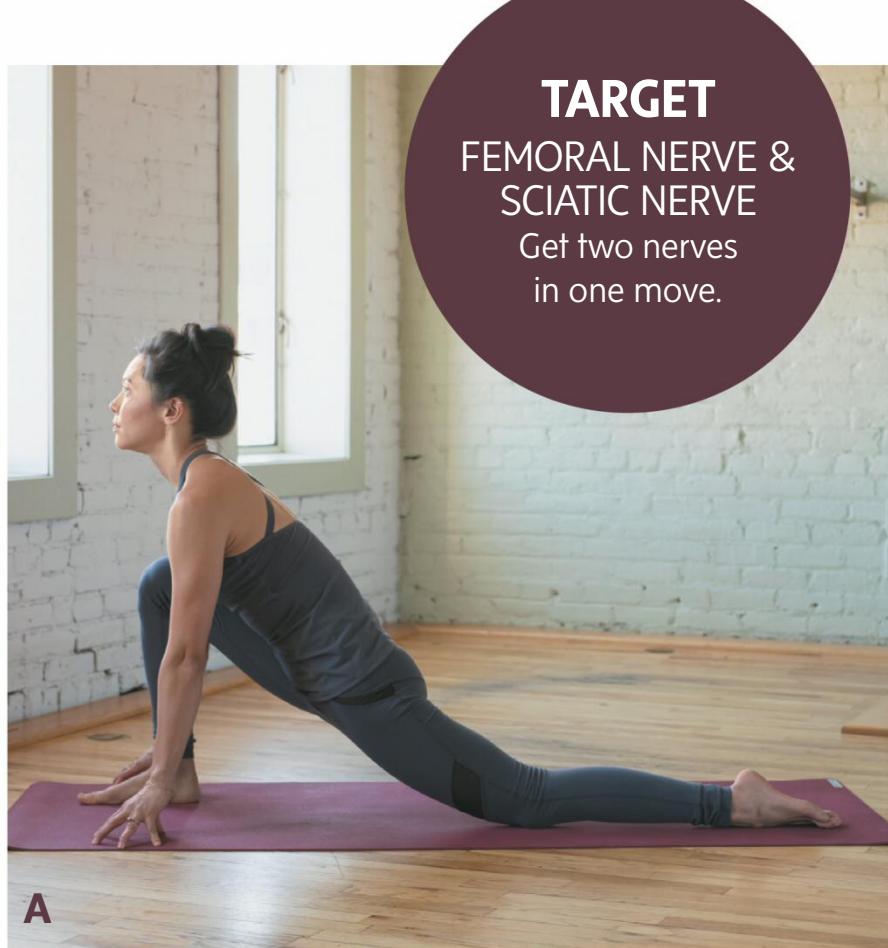


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**TARGET**  
FEMORAL NERVE &  
SCIATIC NERVE  
Get two nerves  
in one move.

**A**



**B**

## 4. ANJANEYASANA ▲

*Low Lunge*

The back-leg action targets the femoral nerve on the front of your hip, and the front-leg action targets the sciatic nerve on the back of your leg. **A** Start in Low Lunge with your left knee on the ground as you lift your head to look straight ahead.

**B** Then, lean your hips back to straighten your right leg (no need to straighten completely), round your back, and tuck your chin.

■ Repeat 5–10 times. Then, switch sides.



**TARGET**  
SCIATIC NERVE  
This technique is for  
people who are using  
nerve flossing as a  
preventative  
practice.

**A**



**B**

## 5. URDHVA PRASARITA EKAPADASANA ▲

*Standing Splits, variation*

This version of Standing Splits offers a more challenging and functional approach for those who are pain-free. **A** For Standing Splits on your right side, bend both of your knees and tap your left knee to your right calf as you look forward.

**B** Then, straighten your legs and lift your left leg as you come onto the ball of your right foot and tuck your chin. Find an easy range of motion.

■ Repeat 5–10 times. Then, switch sides.

## 6. VIRABHADRASANA II ➤

*Warrior Pose II, variation*

The median nerve is the most commonly irritated nerve in your hands and arms. Since pressure on the median nerve is what causes the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, this move can be helpful for this condition and other wrist pain.

**A** From Warrior II on your right side, take your arms out to your sides with your palms facing forward (toward the long edge of the mat). Take your right fingers back so that your palm faces the front of your mat. Bring your left fingers forward as you lean your head to the right.

**B** Then, switch positions with your hands and head so that your right fingers are pointing forward and your left fingers are back as you lean your head to the left.

Find an easy, pain-free range of motion.

■ Repeat 5–10 times.  
Then, switch sides.

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TEACHER **Tiffany Cruikshank** is the founder of Yoga Medicine, a community of teachers focused on fusing anatomy and Western medicine with traditional yoga. For more information, go to [yogamedicine.com](http://yogamedicine.com).

**TARGET**  
**MEDIAN NERVE**  
This nerve runs through your arm and hand.



# YOGA FOR

# DIABETES

By Evan Soroka

Use this sequence  
to find refuge from  
the clutches of  
chronic illness.

**RESTING IS HARD FOR ME.** I would rather be on the go, overcoming hurdles or realising my life vision. However, it's difficult to achieve creative goals without rest, introspection, and relaxation. The same is true in diabetes care. If you have diabetes, like me, you're constantly connected to your continuous glucose monitor, personal diabetes manager, or insulin pump. People with this condition are plugged into a monitor to stay alive, and blood glucose readings get mixed up with who we think we are and we lose our sense of self. Every arrow on the screen, every deviation up or down leaves a residue of subtle negative emotion in the landscape of the body and mind, making it impossible to



relax, because every misstep can have potentially deadly consequences.

Any person facing modern technological advances suffers a great deal from similar mind spin; diabetes is just the microcosm of the macrocosm. The disease simply accentuates the detrimental distractions that people face without diabetes. Mental fluctuations are influenced by external and internal factors. For instance, a blood glucose reading of 400 mg/dL (very high!) can be a catalyst for thoughts that can spiral out of control because of past negative experiences—any number outside of normal range may cause you to remember the last time your glucose was too high and how awful you felt. Even more subtle than the thought is the impression left by the event. You may carry judgmental guilt, stew in the past, fret about what you should have done, worry about the long-term effects, or whatever the story may be. When the mind spins, we often react instead of responding. On a physiological level, the nervous system is in overdrive. A heightened state of arousal (being on guard) sends internal alarms into hyper-mode. Our brains tell our bodies that there's an emergency, pumping stress hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline, and glycogen into the bloodstream. The unintentional effect is insulin resistance (resulting in increased blood sugar), making diabetes much harder to manage. The cumulative result of this vicious cycle is distress, anxiety, and depression.

There is a saying in the diabetes community that we are greater than the sum of the highs and lows. What this means is that although you may have diabetes, you are not diabetes. This may make sense on a cognitive level; however, it cannot be fully understood and integrated into your life until it is realised directly through practice. The sage Patanjali writes about mind chatter in the Yoga Sutra as chitta vritti—fluctuations of consciousness. A goal of yoga is to nullify these fluctuations so that you can rest in your own self-essence, free of all conditions. Yoga intervention practices can stop the spinning cycle, calming the mind and promoting your natural ability to regenerate, heal, and process unwanted emotion. I have type 1 diabetes, and although, as a yoga therapist, I prescribe different exercises for different types of diabetes, the yoga therapy practice on the following pages will benefit anyone who is living with a chronic illness. It promotes an exciting mix of energies—some stimulating and some pacifying—to help you self-regulate and balance out the highs and lows.

# SEQUENCE

## MITIGATE YOUR RESPONSE TO STRESS

### 1. START IN A SEATED POSITION.

Progressively deepen and lengthen the breath. Observe your body in space and time. Notice sensations and circulation. Detect the movement of your mind. Feel the breath: smooth, calm, and peaceful.

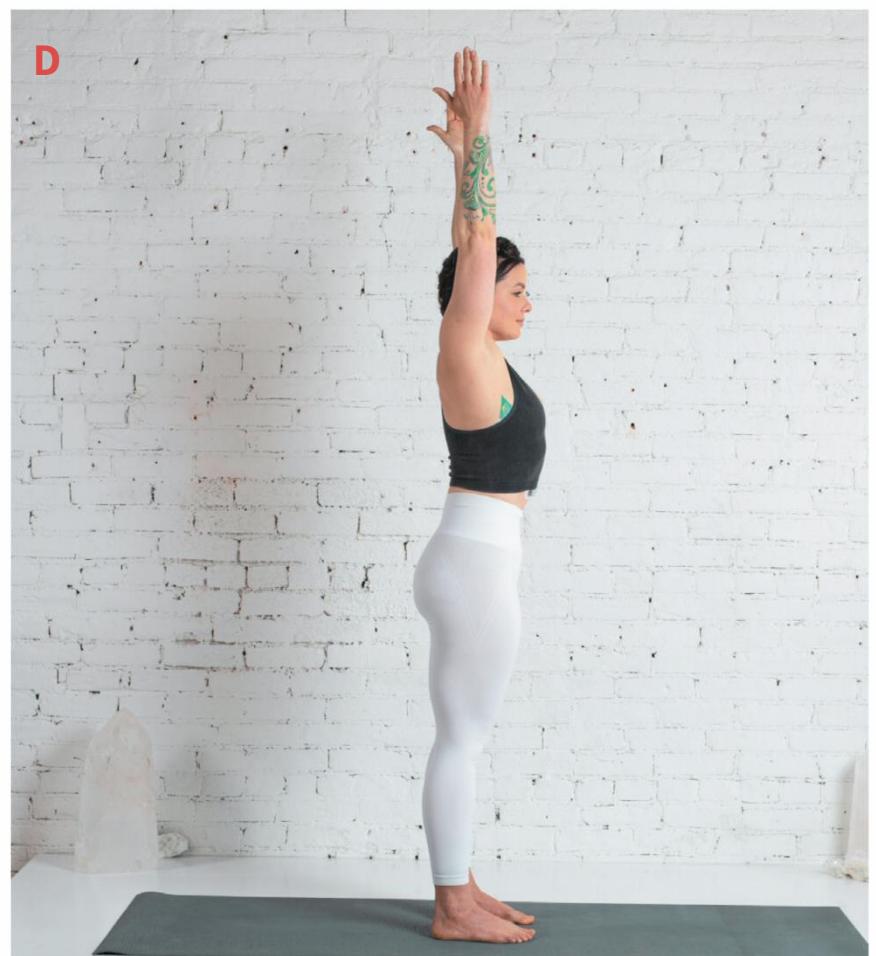


## 2. UTTANASANA + UTKATASANA DYNAMIC FLOW

### *Standing Forward Bend + Chair Pose*

- A** Start in a standing position with your feet slightly separated, arms by your sides.
- B** Inhale and extend both arms overhead.
- C** Exhale, and bend forward, slightly flexing your knees and bringing your hands to the ground.
- D** Inhale and lift your arms and torso simultaneously: Lead with your heart and return to standing with your arms overhead.
- E** Exhale and bend your knees. Sit back, lowering your abdomen toward your thighs. Place your hands on the ground under your shoulders. Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees.
- F** While keeping your knees bent and your hips low, inhale, lift your arms and lean your torso back away from your thighs as far as you can. Continue straightening your legs until you are standing with arms overhead and legs straight. Rest, and observe the effect for a few breaths before moving on to the next posture.

*Chant the mantra Om So Hum on every exhale—it's an invocation to the essential You, who is greater than the sum of the highs and the lows you experience.*





### 3. ARDHA PARSVOTTANASANA

*Half Intense Side Stretch variation*

**A** Stand with your left foot forward, right foot back at a slight angle. Place your left hand on your sacrum, palm facing out. Extend your right arm overhead.

**B** Exhale: Hinge at your hips, bending forward with a slight bend in your front knee.

**C** Inhale: Lift your arm and torso to encourage length through the right side of your body. Retain your breath and silently chant *Om So Hum*.

**D** Exhale: Bend forward and relax your arm.

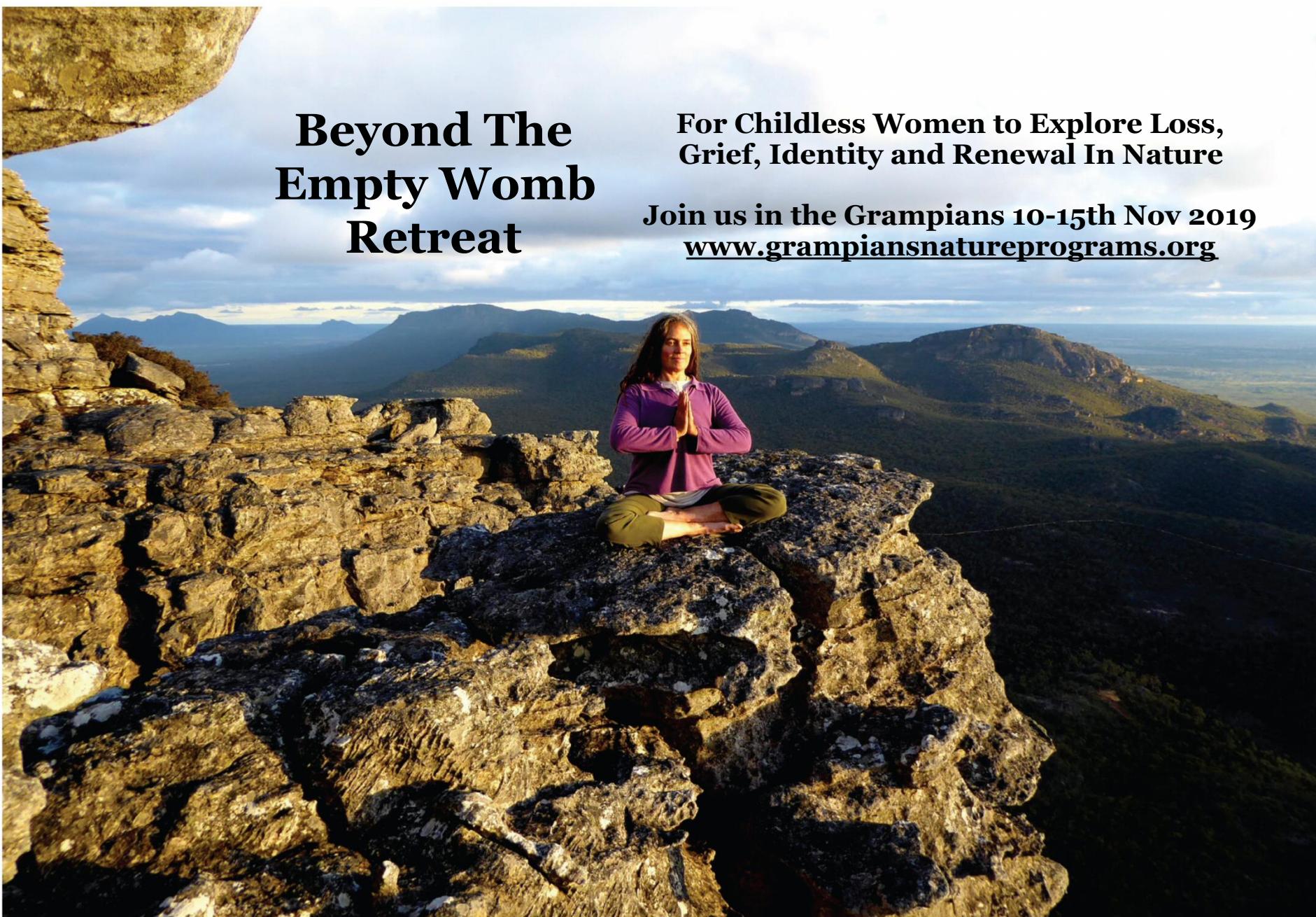
**E** Inhale: Lift your right arm and torso until you're standing with your right arm overhead, challenging it to straighten as your back helps to lift your torso.

■ Repeat 6 times. Then change sides and repeat. Observe your breath, body, mind, and the awareness that witnesses it.

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#### 4. SKANDASANA

*Pose Dedicated to the God of War*

- A** Start by standing with your feet wide and parallel.
- B** Exhale, bending one knee and lowering your hips toward the heel of your bent leg while straightening the other leg and lifting the underbelly of your foot, flexing the ankle (optional). Keep your hands on the floor, or challenge your hands to lift to prayer at the heart. Be mindful, and make sure your knee is tracking in the same direction as your toes.
- C** Inhale and straighten your bent knee, shifting your torso to center.
- D** Exhale, bend your opposite knee, and repeat on the other side.
- Repeat 6–8 rounds.



#### 5. TABLETOP + ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA FLOW

*Tabletop + Downward-Facing Dog Pose*

**A** Start on all fours: wrists stacked under shoulders, knees under hips. Inhale, broaden your collarbone, and lengthen the front of your body, flattening your upper back. Stay here, chanting *Om So Hum* on the exhalation.

**B** Holding the breath after your exhalation, move into Down Dog, mentally chanting *Om So Hum*: Tuck your toes, press firmly into your hands, and lift your hips. Lengthen your spine and relax your head in between your arms. Modify with knees bent to maximise the length of your spine.

**C** Inhale, return to starting position.

■ Repeat 6–8 times.



## 6. ARDHA SALABHASANA

*Half Locust Pose variation*

**A** Lie on your stomach with your legs straight, hands on your sacrum, palms facing up.

**B** Inhale and lift your torso, sweeping your right arm forward and bending your right elbow. Bring your right hand into a salute, while lifting your left leg a few inches from the ground.

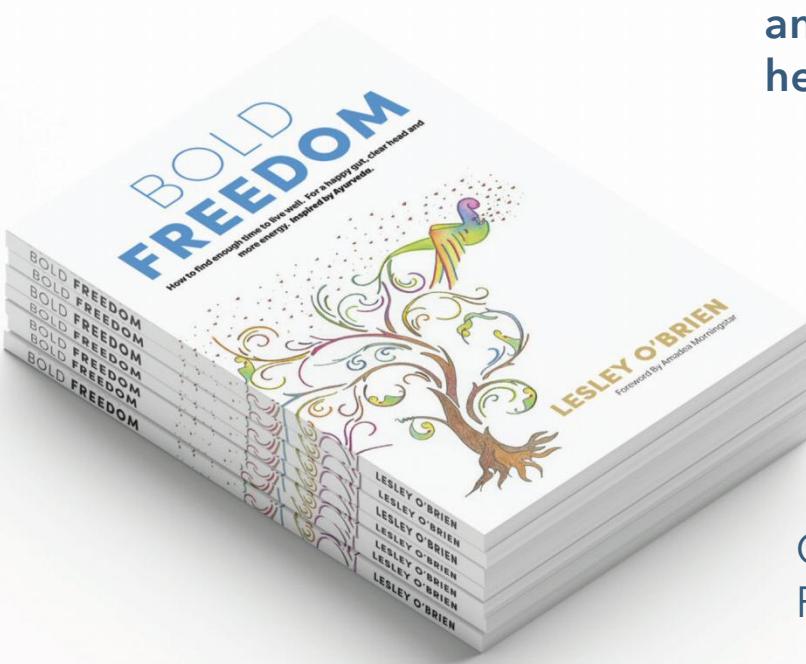
**C** Exhale, sweeping your right arm to your sacrum. Lower your torso, leg, and right cheek to the ground.

Repeat, alternating sides, for 6–8 rounds.



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## 7. SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA

*Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose variation*

**A** Lying on your back, bring your knees into your body, grabbing hold of your feet with your hands. Modify with your hands behind your knees if you can't touch your hands to your feet with straight legs. Press down your low back.

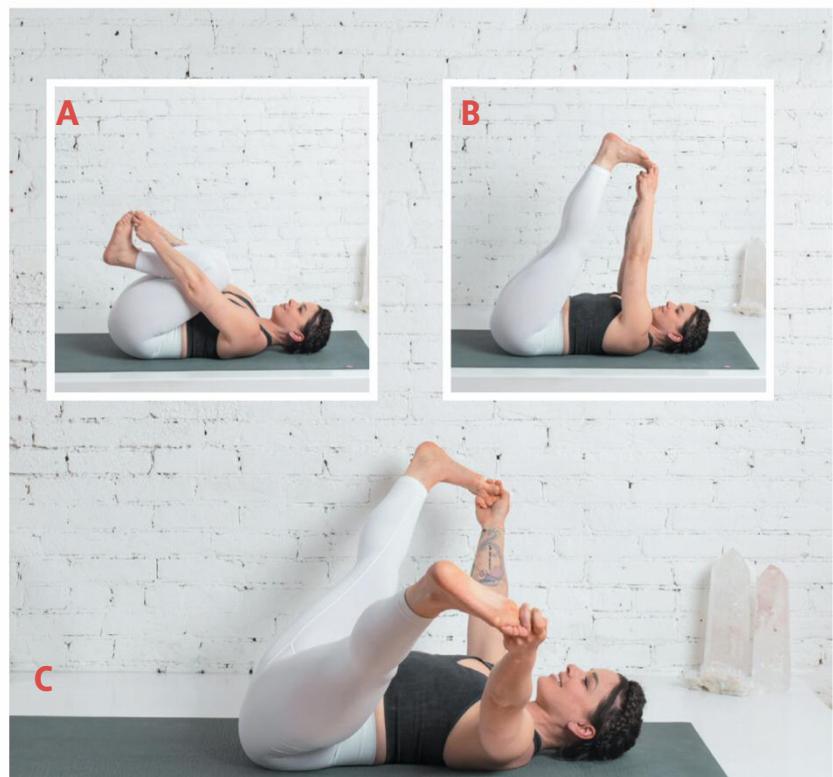
**B** Inhale, straighten your legs, and press your heels toward the ceiling. Keep your legs together

**C** Exhale, open your legs wide, and bend your knees as necessary.

**D** Inhale and return your legs in the direction of perpendicular to your hips.

**E** Exhale and return to the starting position, compressing your legs against your belly.

■ Repeat 6 times. On the last round, keep your legs wide for 4–6 breaths, breathing into your hips and pelvis.



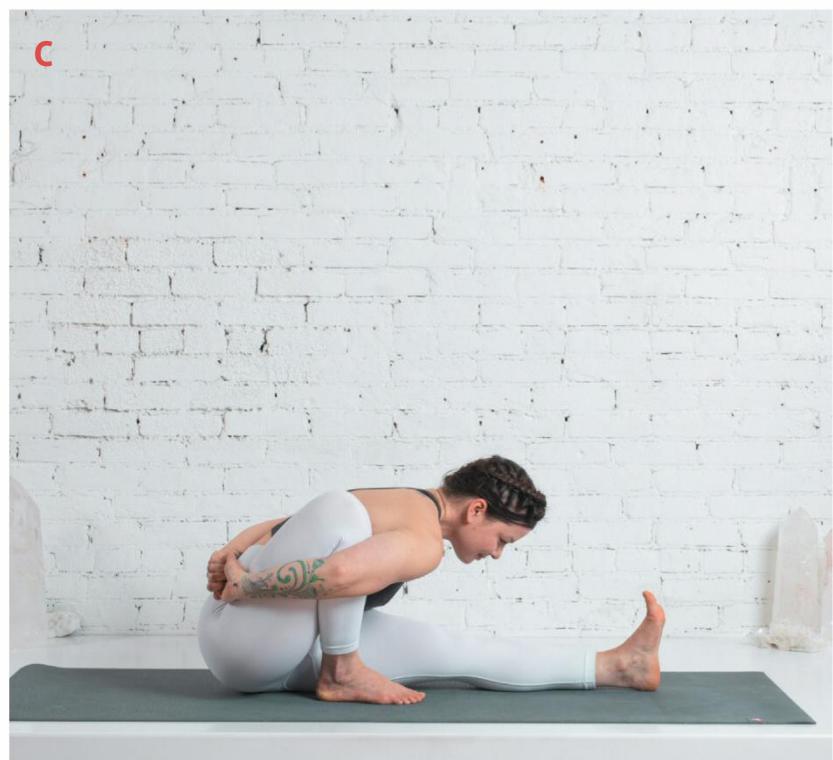
## 8. MARICHYASANA I

*Pose Dedicated to the Sage Marichi I*

**A** Sit tall in Dandasana (Staff Pose).

**B** Bend your right knee with your foot on the ground. Keep your left leg straight. To modify, prop a blanket under your right hip.

**C** Lengthen forward, then sweep your right arm wide and back around your bent right leg, wrapping your arm around your left leg, internally rotating your right shoulder. With your left arm, reach behind your torso, linking your hands. Lengthen the front of your body from your sternum to your navel. On the inhalation, breathe into your upper back. On the exhalation, draw in your abdomen even deeper. Stay here for up to 8 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



## 9. PASCHIMOTTANASANA

*Seated Forward Bend variation*

**A** Extend your legs forward, slightly bending your knees with your back straight. Inhale, and lift your arms overhead.

**B** Exhale and bend forward, hinging at your hips and lengthening your torso. Grab hold of the tops of your feet, or use a strap around your feet.

**C** Inhale, keep the hand-to-foot connection, and lift your torso away from your thighs, leaning back until your upper back is flat and your low back is long. Pull your chin in.

**D** Exhale and return to the forward bend.

**E** Inhale, lift your arms and torso, and then return to the starting position.

■ Repeat 4 times. On the last round, stay in the halfway-up position with your hands holding onto your feet or using a strap. Mentally chant *Om So Hum* on your inhalations and exhalations for up to 8 breaths.



## 10. DVIPADA PITHAM

### Two-Footed Pose

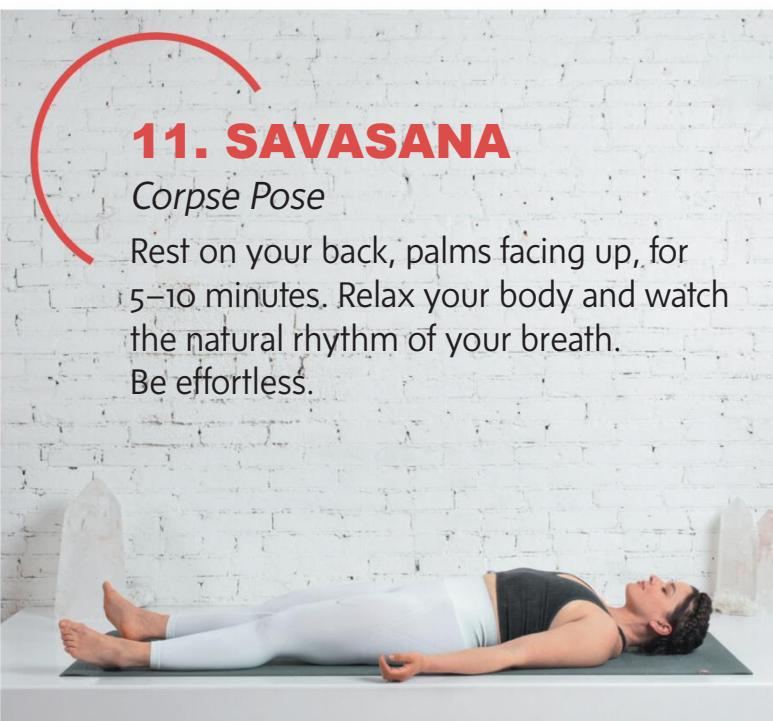
- A** Lie on your back with knees bent, feet hip-width apart, arms by your sides.
- B** Inhale, press into your feet, lift your hips, and move your arms up and behind you.
- C** Exhale and lower your hips and arms simultaneously. █ Repeat 6–8 times.



## 11. SAVASANA

### Corpse Pose

Rest on your back, palms facing up, for 5–10 minutes. Relax your body and watch the natural rhythm of your breath. Be effortless.



## 13. MEDITATION

Establish a completely effortless, natural breath. Let your mind follow your breath.

As your body inhales, feel the mantra So. On the exhalations, feel the mantra Hum at your heart. Hold this awareness for several breaths. Continue to relax your effort. Feel the meaning of the chant: So Hum (I Am).

Feel the part of you that is separate from your illness. Remain in contemplation for as long as you can.

**TEACHER AND MODEL** Evan Soroka is a yoga therapist living with type I diabetes in Aspen, Colorado. She is the owner of Evan Soroka Yoga Therapy, founder of the Rise Above Diabetes Program, and a contributor to Yoga Journal and Yoga International. Learn more at [evansoroka.com](http://evansoroka.com).

## 12. PRANAYAMA

**A** Sit in a comfortable position.

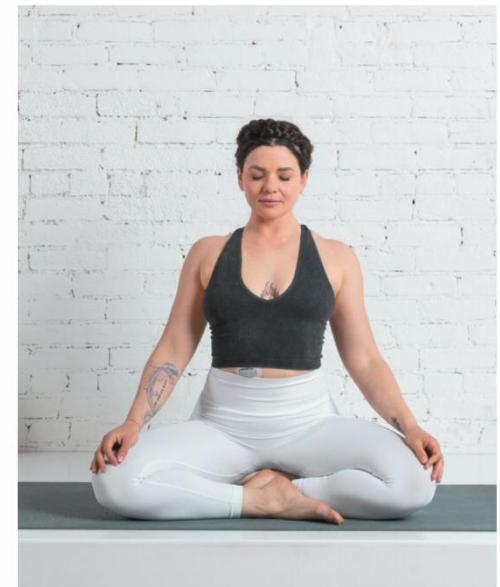
**B** Begin to consciously and smoothly shape your breath. Feel or sense the inhalations descending from the crown of your head to the base of your spine. Exhale from the base of your spine to the crown of your head.

█ Repeat 4 times.

**C** Maintain the continuous flow of breath from the crown of your head to the base of your spine and back to the crown. Begin to mentally chant Om So Hum on both the inhalations and exhalations. █ Repeat 4 times.

**D** Keep going and add a pause after the inhalations, retaining your breath at the base of your spine. Mentally chant *Om So Hum* with the retention. █ Repeat 4 times.

**E** Now, add another pause after your exhalations, suspending the breath at the crown of your head. Mentally chant *Om So Hum* as you suspend your breath. Continue with this breath ratio for 4–12 rounds.



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# BRAVE FACE



# CONFRONT YOUR FEARS HEAD ON. THIS YOGA SEQUENCE WILL HELP UNLEASH YOUR INNER WARRIOR.

By Jivana Heyman

**DO YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF** clenching your jaw waiting for something bad to happen? Or waking up in the morning with a sense of dread? Whether they come in small doses or huge heart-stopping moments of panic, these feelings can be traced back to fear, which can be debilitating, producing a gnawing anxiety that sucks the joy out of life.

In my life, one particularly fearful time stands out: leading up to the moment I told my mother I was gay. I was 17 and confused. I'd found myself living a secret life and not sharing it with her.

Speaking my truth was a major victory, and it made me understand even more how fear had been ruling my life.

Those of us who are marginalised tend to internalise our oppression, which can manifest as fear. During this time in my life, I was scared of being different and of being excluded from society—tossed out like garbage. Mostly, I feared disappointing my mother. My self-worth was so intimately tied to what she thought of me.

It wasn't until I began practicing yoga regularly that I recognised I was living in a constant state of fear, even after coming out to my mother. A mild panic was always boiling just below the surface. Savasana (Corpse Pose) gave it away. I remember getting very quiet, maybe for the first time ever without the help of alcohol or drugs. I jerked awake as if I had fallen asleep too quickly. But I wasn't asleep. My nervous system was just reacting to its first opportunity to unwind the tension it had been storing up for years—in an effort to protect me. It had saved my life by giving me the

quick reflexes I needed to duck when some drunk, homophobic man threw a beer bottle at my head. But it was also killing me slowly with stress and anxiety.

Yoga became my refuge, helping me undo a lot of the hidden tension in my body. I realised that so many people carry similar burdens—knots of anxiety in our jaws and necks. I started teaching yoga, sharing it with the HIV/AIDS community in the early '90s and I saw the practice's power to offer relief from the fear that silently engulfs us.

In our shared suffering, I also saw the possibility of salvation. The strength of a group "Om" echoed in my heart louder than when I chanted it alone. In yoga, I found the possibility of overcoming fear through community. Those of us who look different move differently, and love differently need to support one another and hold each other in strong embrace. That initial yoga community I discovered through teaching was the birthplace of Accessible Yoga, the organisation I founded to support teachers like me, who are bringing the practice to communities that are underserved and underrepresented in yoga spaces.

I always felt that yoga offered more than a great stretch or workout. It gave me a way to connect with others and myself at the same time. It's a great paradox—when I turn within, I find you there. It is in the presence of community that I'm able to release my fear. I feel carried and cared for. I feel like I have a special place in the world and that I belong. You can find a bit of that feeling on the following pages.

# SEQUENCE

## THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR

Yoga can offer an unbridled calmness and gentle confidence. This can be realised in multiple ways: through an asana practice that releases physical tension, breathing practices that increase energy and soothe the nervous system, and guided meditations that build trust and faith. Fear isn't something to simply overcome, it must be understood and worked through. Yoga allows us to decipher the messages that come from our spirit in the form of emotions like fear.

Are you afraid to practice yoga? Do you feel like you don't have a yoga body? It's important to remember that the overarching goal of yoga is discovering peace of mind, and it's fair to say that there is no correlation between physical ability and peace of mind. It doesn't matter if you practice on a mat or in a chair, or what the pose looks like from the outside.

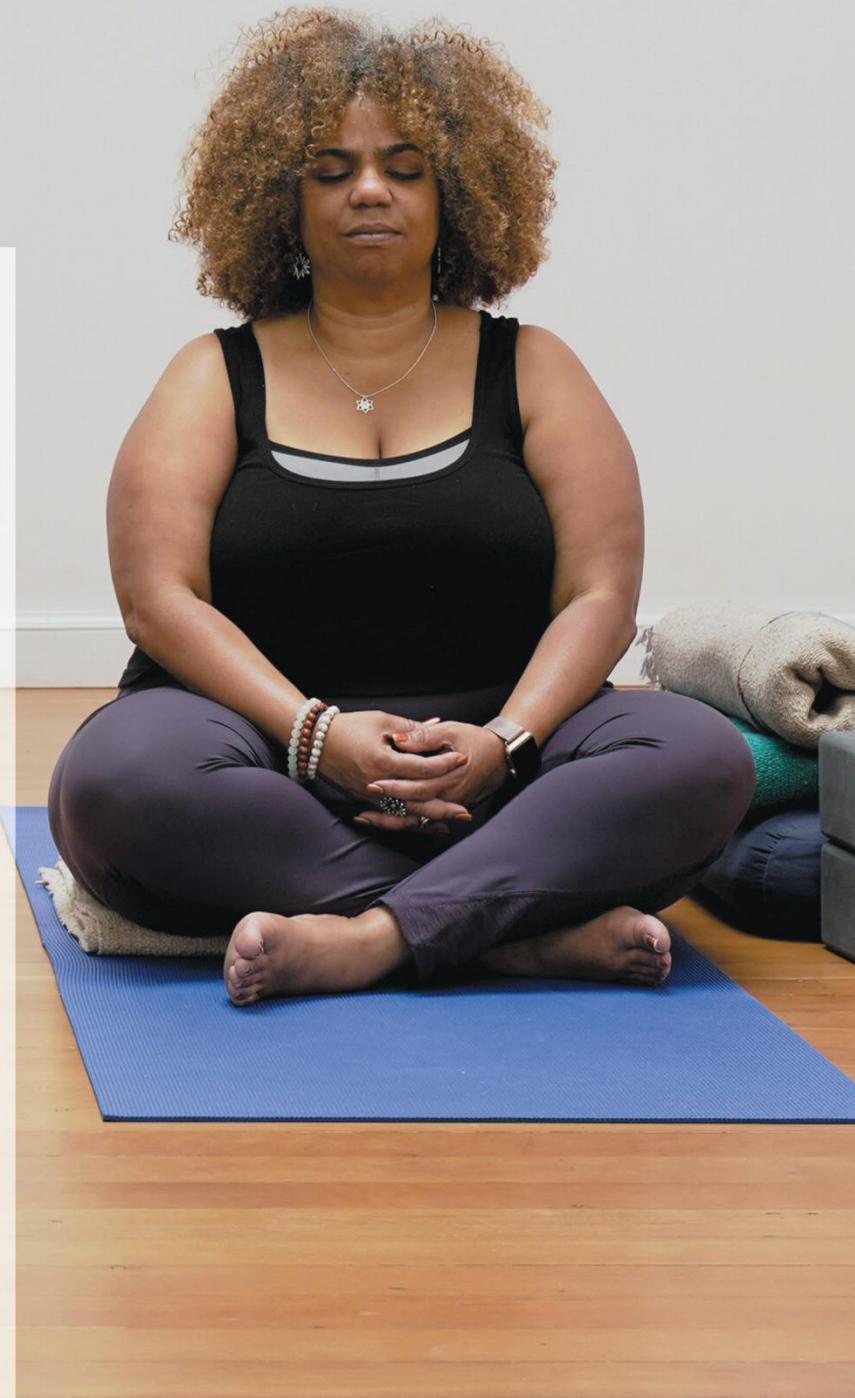


### TURN INWARD

#### 1. SUKHASANA *Easy Pose*

**In a chair:** If you're on the shorter side, use a folded blanket under your feet to make your knees level with (or slightly lower than) your hips. If you're tall, try sitting on a folded blanket instead. Do your best to sit forward so that you don't lean against the back of the chair.

**On a mat:** Come to a comfortable seat on a folded blanket or a cushion. If sitting cross-legged isn't comfortable, try putting your back against a wall with your legs extended in front of you. Inhale brightness and lengthen your spine. *Take a few deep breaths here.*



# Grounding Breath Practice in Sukhasana

**In a chair on a mat:** Find a comfortable seat and close your eyes. Focus on the solidity of the ground or seat beneath you. Inhale, and lengthen your spine. As you exhale, imagine your breath moving down your body into the ground as if you are growing roots into the earth. Spend a moment focusing on the feeling of your belly moving forward as you inhale and in as you exhale. You can place your hand on your belly to encourage this movement. This type of deep breathing calms the nervous system and creates a feeling of safety.



## STAY STEADY IN THE STORM

### 2. VRKSASANA Tree Pose

**In a chair:** Sitting tall, shift your weight to your left foot. Bring your right leg out to the right side and lift your right heel off the floor. Bring your palms together at your chest. Exhale and lean forward slightly, sending your awareness into your left foot. Then inhale and raise your arms, keeping your palms together or separating your arms into a V shape.

**On a mat:** Come to a tall standing position with your knees soft, thighs engaged. Take a breath and as you exhale, grounding down through your feet. Shift your weight to your left foot as you bend your right knee and rotate your right leg out to the side. Keeping the toes of your right foot on the floor, place your heel against your left ankle. Pause here and bring your palms together at your chest. Exhale into your left foot, and then inhale, raising your arms overhead, keeping your hands together or separating your arms into a wide V shape. If this is comfortable, try lifting the toes of your left foot and find your balance there. Wave your arms and fingers like a tree in a breeze. Take a few breaths here. Repeat on the other side.

## BECOME FIERCE & FLEXIBLE

### 3. BHUJANGASANA Cobra Pose

**In a chair:** Sit with a bolster or folded blanket on your lap. Place your forearms and palms on the bolster and pull it gently toward your belly. Inhale and lengthen your spine. As you exhale, gently hinge forward over the bolster, slightly lowering your head. Inhale and raise your head and chest, keeping your neck long.

**On a mat:** Lie on your abdomen with a folded blanket under your pelvis. This blanket can help to lengthen your lower back. Place your forehead on the mat with your hands underneath your shoulders, palms facing down. Exhale and press your pelvis into the blanket. Inhale and lengthen your spine, slowly lifting your chest and head. Stay low and keep your neck long as you look straight ahead. Feel your chest move forward as you move your shoulders back. Take a few breaths. Repeat if it feels good.

# SURRENDER TO WHAT IS

## 4. BALASANA *Child's Pose*

**In a chair:** Sit tall and widen your knees. Stand a bolster on end between your knees and hold it in your hands. Inhale and lengthen your spine; exhale, hinging forward at the hips. Rest your forearms on your thighs, and your forehead on the bolster. If you don't have a bolster, you can try practicing with a second chair in front of you, with the seat facing you. Place a blanket or block on the seat of the second chair, and as you hinge forward try to place your forehead on it.

**On a mat:** Kneel on top of a folded blanket with your toes coming off the edge of the blanket. Place another blanket or a bolster behind your thighs and sit back toward your feet. Widen your knees. Either place a bolster in front of you between your legs or bring your hands to the floor in front of you. Inhale and lengthen your spine. Exhale and hinge forward at your hips. Slowly lower your torso toward the floor, resting your forehead on the bolster or the floor in front of you.

*Take a few breaths, feeling gentle pressure at your third eye centre.*



5



## FEEL CALM & BALANCED

### 5. NADI SHODHANA

*Alternate Nostril Breathing*

**In a chair or on a mat:** Come to a comfortable seated position with a long spine. Using either hand, close the right nostril and slowly exhale from the left nostril. Then inhale and switch nostrils, closing the left nostril and exhaling slowly from the right. Continue with this pattern: exhale, inhale, switch nostrils. Focus on lengthening the breath, especially the exhalations. Make the breath as slow and gentle as you can without straining.

*Continue for a few minutes, ending with an exhalation from the right nostril. Notice how you feel.*



## SAY YES TO YOURSELF

### 6. NADI SHODHANA *Meditation*

**In a chair or on a mat:** Stay seated or recline in Savasana on the floor. Close your eyes or look downward. Bring your awareness to your mind: Begin to notice the thoughts and feelings that come and go. Each time you notice something arise, silently repeat the word "yes." Then see if you can let that thought go. This technique helps us learn to work with the mind, accepting the thoughts without judgement, and

then letting them go. Notice if your mind begins to settle, and if so, enjoy a moment of well-deserved rest.

*After a few minutes, take a deep inhalation, slowly exhale, and then open your eyes. Notice how you're feeling.*

**TEACHER Jivana Heyman** is the founder and director of Accessible Yoga, a non-profit dedicated to increasing access to yoga teachings. He's the author of the upcoming book Accessible Yoga: Poses and Practices for Every Body (Shambhala Publications).

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# QUANTUM *leap*

True transformation is a radical process.  
Here's how to navigate the shift gracefully.

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By Sally Kempton

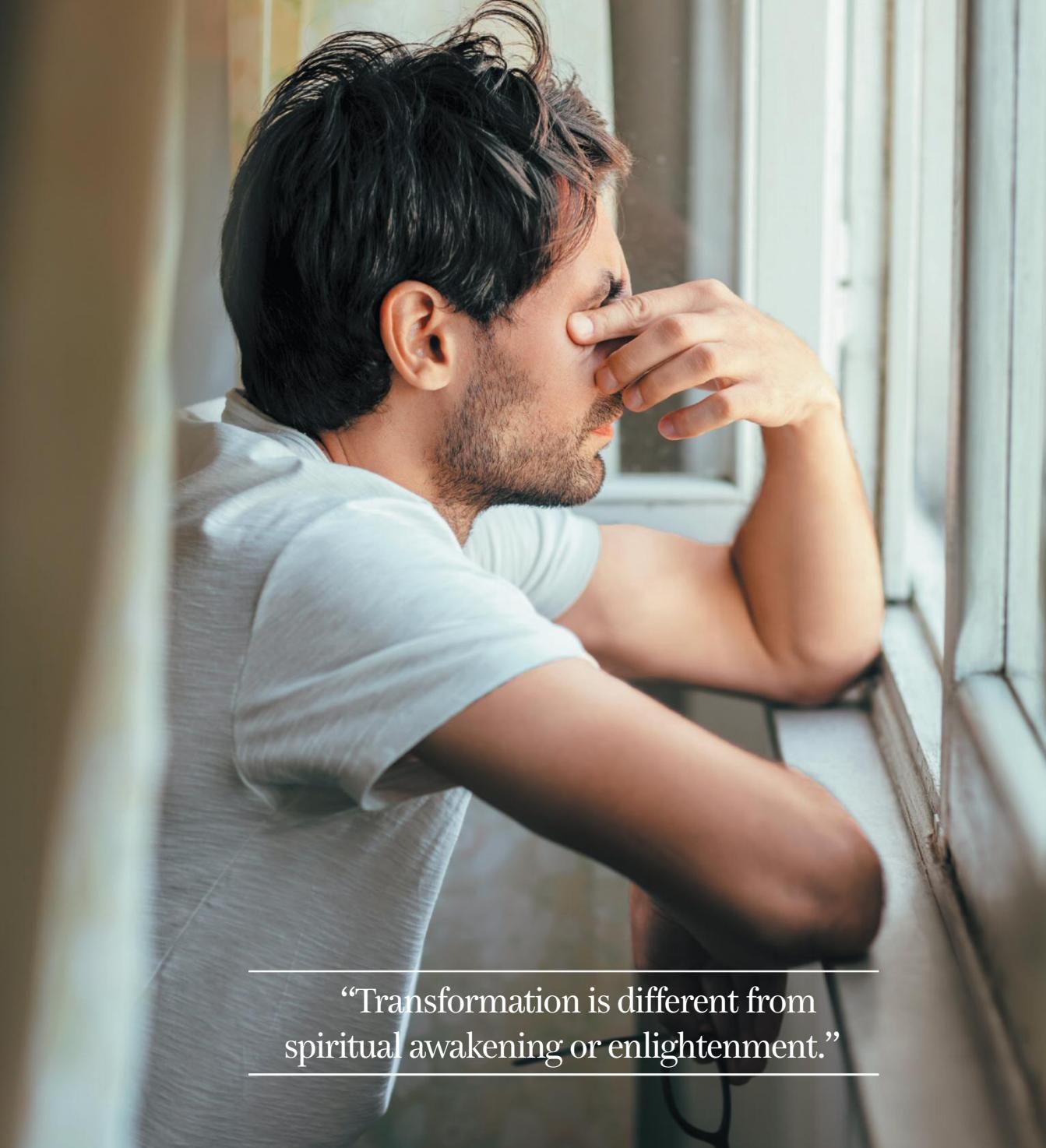
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**DURING A MEDITATION**, Doug, a long-time yoga student of mine, had a profound spiritual awakening, accompanied by the recognition that there was something inauthentic about the life he was leading. Among other things, he saw that his medical practice had gone dead, and he desperately needed to take a sabbatical to contemplate his path. Doug's wife didn't agree, and his decision exposed all the fault lines in their 20-year marriage. Now they're discussing divorce, while Doug studies yoga therapeutics and spends hours a day meditating and writing. He says he cries several times a week and feels as if he's swimming in a fast, hot river of emotions—his own and other people's. Even more unsettling is the fact that he doesn't

know where all of this is taking him.

Doug's experience of radical uncertainty is typical for someone who's deep inside a transformational process. In one of Rumi's poems, a boiling chickpea speaks up from out of the stew pot, complaining about the heat and the blows from the chef's spoon. The chef tells him, "Just let yourself be cooked! In the end, you'll be a delicious morsel!" Over the years, when yoga's fire has felt especially hot, I've re-read that poem and appreciated how well it describes the psychic cooking that takes place during certain phases of transformation, which, after all, is a process in which you literally allow yourself to be softened, opened, even broken apart, in order to expand your sense of who you are.





“Transformation is different from spiritual awakening or enlightenment.”

When you’re in the midst of the process, you may feel like that overheated chickpea—or like cookie dough, raw and untogether. Even more dislocating, you may not know exactly who you are. That uncertainty—the feeling that you’re in between your old self and an unknown new one—is one of the signs that you’re in a true transformative process.

Transformation is different from spiritual awakening or enlightenment. The contemporary philosopher Yasuhiko Kimura defines transformation as a dance between being and becoming. Being is the changeless source of all that is, the formless ground where words and categories dissolve, which many of you have perhaps touched during meditation or Savasana (Corpse Pose). Becoming is the part of you that grows, changes, and shifts. It is the realm where inspiration becomes actualised in the world. Being is your still center, your source; becoming is your personality, your body, and your interactions with the world.

When you have a spiritual awakening, or even a deep experience

of stillness in meditation, you return to pure being, an immersion in the love and freedom of undying essence. Transformation, on the other hand, is what happens when the insights and experiences that emerge from pure being meet your ordinary human personality and your day-to-day reality and begin to infuse your choices and relationships.

Doug’s transformative process began when he realised that the insight he’d had in meditation was demanding to be lived. An old friend of mine described a similar moment in his life. He’d spent a month in retreat with his teacher, finding that his capacity for loving had increased exponentially in his teacher’s presence. Back in the stream of ordinary life, he’d watch the love evaporate under the pressure of making a living and dealing with daily minutiae.

For him, the process of transformation arose from the tension between the love and wisdom of pure being that he experienced while on retreat and the everyday habits and feelings that characterised his former self. It’s that tension that actually

begets change. In fact, the tension is part of the process, a sign that transformation is imminent. There are other signals that you can learn to recognise, too, because for most of us, real transformation happens in stages that can be tracked.

## THE WAKE-UP CALL

Transformative journeys start with a wake-up call: For some, it arrives like Doug’s did, as a sudden, intuitive recognition. But just as often, the call may come through an external crisis. For instance, Francesco, a young actor, says his transformation began when a director fired him from a film, alleging he didn’t know how to express real emotion. For Dale, the triggering event was the early death of her husband. Yoga and spirituality teacher Andrew heard the alarm bell when a student left him, asserting that his life didn’t reflect his teaching. Each event was heartbreakingly—not only did it shatter the external framework of these people’s lives, but it shattered their beliefs about themselves.

Evolutionary biologist Elisabet Sahtouris has written that stress is what creates evolution in nature: Plants grow through pruning. Human beings grow the same way. When we’re faced with a situation that we can’t control or change with our current level of understanding and skill, evolutionary stress arises and impels us to question, seek, practice, and eventually take a leap outside of our comfort zones into higher levels of awareness.

## HOLDING UNCERTAINTY

Stress is uncomfortable and, for some, downright disturbing. But in science and in spirituality, important breakthroughs are often preceded by a period of intense frustration or impasse. Consider a scientist who has assembled data and performed innumerable experiments, but can’t seem to crack the problem. Her passionate quest for answers and her frustration about not receiving them build to a white-hot intensity. In this impasse, the answers emerge from her momentarily still mind. Often, it takes the form of an insight, like a download from the Source while resting or taking a walk.

Spiritual breakthroughs follow a similar pattern. You search for answers

with intense curiosity and intention. Great teachers on the path of self-inquiry, such as Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj, sought to answer the question, "Who am I really?" For Doug, the question is, "How should I live?"

The period following a wake-up call often requires letting yourself live in the stress of unanswered questions and unsolved problems. It's a time of intense effort and practice—of longing for wisdom, for change. This intensity breeds Tapas, or transformative heat—burning off bad habits through purification, refining your vessel, and opening your psyche for revelation and insight.

## ASKING FOR HELP

During your transformative journey, questioning will require practice. Effort is crucial for developing a vessel to hold the developing shift or insight. You may also need the help of a teacher or counselor, and that of grace—which one of my teachers defined as “that which returns things to the Source.” True shifts of consciousness emerge from being,

and the most direct way to ask for help from being is tapping the Source.

I've always found that most of my major breakthroughs have followed intense prayer. Depending on my mood in the moment, I pray to god, to the field of consciousness, or to my higher Self. I believe that it's important to pray only for things that will benefit others as well. But I also know that positive transformation in an individual's consciousness is beneficial to others, so I have no qualms about asking for help when I come up against inner obstructions.

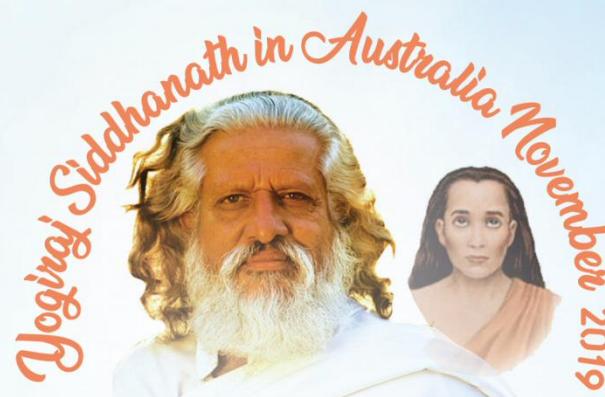
There's something about the conviction of our essential helplessness that seems to attract grace. Praying helps me let go of my pride and my sense of control, because I've found prayer to be most effective when I start by saying, "I can't do this myself. Grace will have to help me."

## GRACE, INSIGHT, AND AWAKENING

I can always tell when grace has rushed in. For one thing, it's exhilarating and often miraculous. You read a book, and

the exact words you need to hear leap out at you. You're drawn to take a class with a particular teacher who gives you the insight that helps change your entire psychic structure. You hear yourself saying exactly the right thing to a friend and know it was divine intervention. When grace is around, your life's filled with synchronicities, meaningful coincidences, and inspiration that seem to effortlessly propel you forward. This part of the transformation cycle can be incredibly exciting, often because it feels as though you're learning how to open up to the wisdom that comes from being. Kabbalist spiritual teacher Marc Gafni says that true personal transformation requires rewriting our source code, the deep internal programming that determines the way we experience certain situations. Since we don't know how to get to the source code on our own, that deep shifting has to come from insight—the intuitive awareness that arises from within.

You'll know that you're experiencing this level of insight when a truth you've been reading or hearing for years is



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suddenly realised. When you finally know that you really are not your thoughts or that you actually can change your experience by changing your perception, everything will feel a little different, and you'll sense that your world will never be the same again.

## THE HONEYMOON

The phase that begins with the descent of grace—with its synchronicities and seemingly miraculous realisations—is like falling in love and discovering that your beloved loves you, too. It's often called the honeymoon phase, and it can last for years. During the honeymoon, you may feel as though all of your struggles have vanished. Spiritual power runs through you—sometimes so strongly that others catch it. You may feel a euphoria that comes with sensing the presence of grace. For many people, this creates a subtle (or not so subtle) feeling of spiritual superiority: a feeling that you're being guided or shown the way, and a slight disdain for people who haven't gotten there yet. This is often the moment when you decide to indulge your whims—leave your old life behind and run off to India or quit your day job and open a yoga studio. Sometimes it's the right decision. Sometimes it isn't.

“During the honeymoon, you may feel as though all of your struggles have vanished...”

## THE FALL FROM GRACE

The danger that comes with the honeymoon period is the risk of overconfidence. In the euphoria of your love affair with transformation, you can overstep boundaries by believing that you can do no wrong or by blindly following intuitive guidance without discernment. For this reason, almost inevitably, the honeymoon with grace will be followed by some kind of fall—or at least the feeling of having fallen. Sometimes it feels like dryness, like you have been cut off from the flow that you'd experienced. Maybe you made a professional mistake; fell in love with someone inappropriate; or quarreled with your best friend, your family, or your teacher. Perhaps you ditched your marriage or became discouraged by the complications involved in making a significant life change. But just as often, what feels like a fall is actually a deep purification, an emotional detox, during which psychological issues and vulnerabilities that you may not have processed emerge to be looked at and worked through.

Why does this happen? Usually it's because our psychological vessel is not quite strong enough to hold our powerful spiritual insight. Here's an

example. Years ago, a friend of mine attended a meditation retreat with a prominent teacher from India. During one of the meditation sessions, she saw a beautiful golden light inside herself and realised that many of her beliefs about herself—her feelings of guilt, of unworthiness, of lacking—were completely unreal. “It was more than seeing a light,” she said. “I saw my own beauty and goodness.” The experience left her in a state of almost operatic bliss, accompanied by a new gift of psychic insight that convinced her that she was being guided from within. Following both the bliss and the guidance, she left her professional career to live at her teacher's ashram.

She began to practice with great discipline, following the intuitive notions that came from inside. She used to say, with unmistakable pride, “I'm so fortunate: I never have to worry about what to do, because I always have this internal knowing.” After a while, her intuition began guiding her food choices. More often than not, it would tell her to eat very little—often less than a handful of food at mealtime. She began losing weight. Her teacher told her she was too thin and strongly warned her to consume more. But since her inner guidance was telling her otherwise, she kept eating less and less. It was only when she became extremely thin that it was clear that she had anorexia and needed to address certain psychological issues.

She left India, got a job and a therapist, worked through her eating disorder, and came back to her practice on a much firmer footing. But for a long time, she believed that she had failed somewhere on her spiritual path, fallen from grace, and been counted out of the game. In fact, what she needed was to find some sort of balance in her body and psyche before she could move forward.

This is an extreme example, for sure, but it illustrates one of the laws of spiritual awakening: Even when you're given a glimpse of who you can be, it usually takes work to bring the separate strands of your being into alignment with the vision. Some of this is simply fine-tuning, but some of it can be quite radical, especially when shadowy aspects of your personality surface. During this part of the process, as you oscillate between your new self and the



old you, you may feel the kind of confusion that Doug did.

## INTEGRATION

The fall is an important part of the journey. Not just because it is humbling, but it underscores the need for integration and initiates the integrative process.

In the integration phase, you may find yourself, like Doug, negotiating contradictions. Your inner developmental process may seem to demand radical freedom to practice, travel, or renegotiate the terms of your life. At the same time, you are called to honor your commitments to family or career, all while navigating the realities of survival in the 21st century. Integrating spiritual change happens only when you take the insights of your awakening and radically apply them to your life, allowing them to percolate within you and change the way you express yourself—in actions and relationships. It's one thing, for instance, to recognise in yoga class that you are one with the earth. It's quite another to alter your life to bring it in

line with this recognition. To do so may involve modifications in your diet, changes in the way you use your body or consume goods and services and shifts in your internal attitudes. The integration process is what grounds your transformative experiences, making them actual lived ways of moving in the world.

Integration demands that you put effort into consciously turning insights into action. Yet—and here is the inherent mystery of the transformation process—the integration stage happens beneath the surface of your consciousness. True transformation is a natural process that affects how you think, act, and feel in each situation. This means that you cannot control the pace of transformation any more than you can control the way in which an apple tree flowers and bears fruit. Ripening must take place, both in fruit trees and in human beings.

A practitioner friend of mine has been going through a long process of deep shifting recently. For several years, she had been longing for intimate connection, which seemed to be missing

from her life. Then, her world was blown apart by a sudden love affair, which seemed to embody the intimate communion she'd longed for. The relationship was too intense to last, and when it ended, it sent her into a period of confusion and uncertainty much like Doug's. But she knew enough not to try to make any quick decisions, and instead to sit in the uncertainty and let the situation unfold.

She committed herself to working with a therapist and began meditating for long periods each day. As the insights she gleaned in therapy meshed with those that arose in meditation, she began to experience her kinship with the living energy in the natural world. Over a period of months, as though she'd stepped over a kind of threshold, more and more of her encounters with others were informed by her growing sense of shared energy. Very naturally, her ways of relating to other people began to deepen. She stopped needing to fill silences with social chatter. She stopped feeling anxious about connecting with others.

*continued on page 97*

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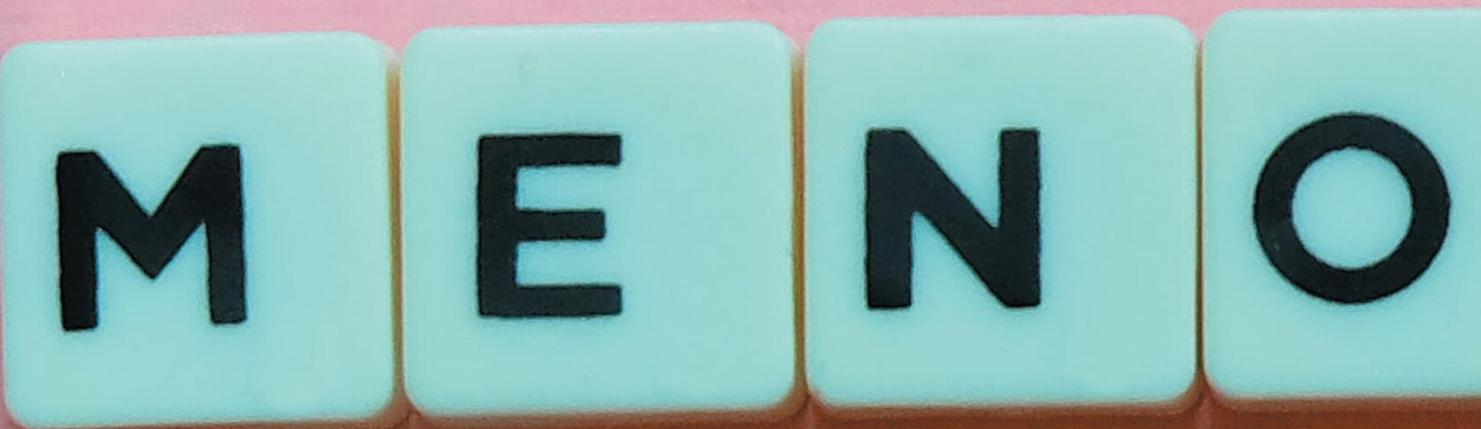
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# YOGA FOR



MENNO

Many women have found that yoga, including restorative and supportive poses, can ameliorate the undesirable side effects of menopause, including hot flashes and more.

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By Trisha Gura

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# PAUSE

**WHEN ALISON, 48,** began experiencing intense hot flashes, they often arrived at night and interrupted her sleep. But on the whole, her perimenopausal symptoms were more annoying than unbearable. Then her menstrual cycle spun out of control. "Suddenly, my menstrual flow was really heavy and lasted twice as long as before," says Alison, who requested that her last name not be used. "My periods went on forever." Her gynecologist suggested that Alison try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), prescription drugs used to control menopausal symptoms. "She told me not to rule it out if my symptoms were really bad, but my

feeling was that I'd rather try to just get through them," Alison says. She had good reason for wanting to avoid HRT. The treatment regimen, which artificially elevates a woman's estrogen and progesterone levels, has come under intense scrutiny in recent years. Major studies have linked it to an increased risk of breast cancer, heart disease, strokes, and other life-threatening conditions.

Soon after Alison's menstrual cycles became so irregular, she went to class at Yoga Circle, her regular studio, and learned an Iyengar asana sequence designed to help women cope with the physical discomforts related to their

cycles. Many of the poses were restorative; they included Supta Virasana (Reclining Hero Pose), Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose), and Janu Sirsasana (Head-of-the-Knee Pose) with the head supported. When Alison's next menstrual period began, she practiced the sequence every day and noticed that her flow returned to normal. Encouraged by the results, she began to think that she could control her symptoms without HRT. Maybe, she thought, yoga could provide the relief she was looking for. And her intuition proved correct. Many women have found that yoga can ameliorate the undesirable side effects of menopause.

## Yoga for Hormonal Imbalances

Though menopause itself is simply the moment that menstruation stops, the transition generally takes several years. This phase is called perimenopause and typically occurs in women between the ages of 45 and 55. During perimenopause, fluctuating estrogen and progesterone levels can trigger a myriad of uncomfortable symptoms. Among the most common are hot flashes, anxiety and irritability, insomnia, fatigue, depression and mood swings, memory lapses, and an erratic menstrual cycle.

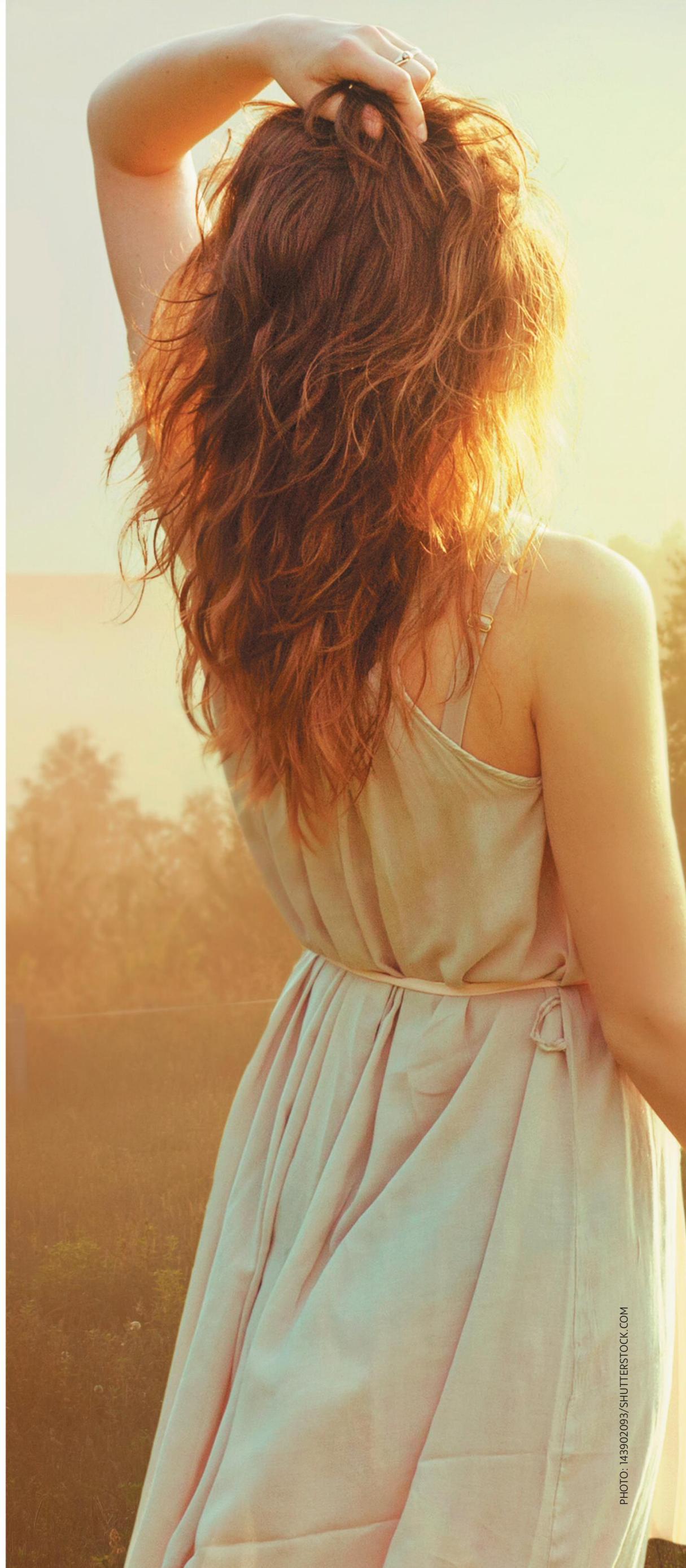
Few women experience all of these, but an estimated 55 to 65 percent of them do experience some mild menopause-related problems, says Dr. Rowan Chlebowski, of the Harbour UCLA Research and Education Institute in Torrance, California. About 25 percent report almost no disruption to their daily lives, while approximately 10 to 20 percent suffer severe and often debilitating symptoms.

Hormonal fluctuations generally accompany women's passages into each new biological stage of life; with them often come various discomforts, such as acne and mood swings at puberty, morning sickness during pregnancy, and postpartum depression. "Menopause is no exception," says Dr. Nancy Lonsdorf, author of *A Woman's Best Medicine for Menopause*.

Before the onset of perimenopause, a woman's menstrual cycle is set in motion each month by the hypothalamus, a small structure at the base of the brain that regulates many bodily functions, including appetite and temperature. The hypothalamus signals the pituitary gland to produce important hormones for reproduction, and those hormones in turn stimulate production of estrogen and progesterone in the ovaries. During perimenopause, the ovaries and pituitary gland engage in a kind of tug-of-war. The ovaries decrease hormone production, while the pituitary gland, sensing low hormone levels, continues to spur on the ovaries. This frenetic struggle causes erratic hormonal fluctuations—too much estrogen, which revs the body's motors, followed by spikes of progesterone, which slows the body.

"Hormones are very powerful; they affect just about every tissue of the body," Lonsdorf says. "So it's no wonder that various conditions can arise as the body tries to adjust to these hormonal shifts. For instance, when the brain is affected by erratic hormone patterns, sleep, mood, and memory may all be influenced, and when the uterus is stimulated by sporadic hormone patterns, irregular bleeding occurs, and so on."

Typically, a woman experiences the first signs of this hormonal fluctuation about six years before her menstrual periods end. These





symptoms generally continue until a year or more after her last period, when the hormone levels gradually stabilise. After menopause, the ovaries produce less of the female hormones. However, the body still needs some estrogen to keep the bones healthy and to prevent conditions like vaginal dryness. The adrenal glands, which are located above the kidneys, play an important role in this by secreting low levels of male hormones that are converted by fat cells into estrogen. Still, the body must adjust to a new, much lower hormone level.

These natural physiological changes and the havoc they can wreak for many women prompted researchers in the late 1960s to seek a solution for common menopausal symptoms. The treatment they ultimately proposed was HRT. Their reasoning was that problems stemming from declining estrogen levels could simply be eliminated if the missing hormones were replaced. Scientists believed that maintaining hormone levels similar to what the body was used to would provide relief.

HRT was a simple solution for managing menopausal symptoms. But since several major studies have shown that HRT exposes women to serious health risks, many women have begun seeking more natural solutions. Those who have turned to yoga for relief have found that while asana may not directly influence estrogen production, specific postures can help control unpleasant symptoms. Restorative postures in particular can relax the nervous system and may improve the functioning of the endocrine system (especially the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, the thyroid, and the parathyroid gland), which helps the body adapt to hormonal fluctuations.

## Alleviating the Symptoms of Menopause

Yoga instructor Patricia Walden, 57, knows firsthand how yoga can help temper menopausal complaints. Like many other women's symptoms, hers arrived like rain: first a sprinkle, then a full-fledged storm. Hot flashes came first, and then—for the next year—she suffered through constant fatigue and

insomnia. She often awoke in the night and stayed awake for up to three hours.

**“She suffered through constant fatigue and insomnia...”**

On the days when Walden had intense symptoms, she found she needed to modify her yoga routine. She was accustomed to a vigorous daily practice but discovered that unsupported inversions, strenuous poses, and backbends sometimes made her symptoms worse. When that happened, she turned to supported and restorative poses to calm her nerves. She still did inversions, but instead of an unsupported Sirsasana (Headstand), which sometimes brought on more hot flashes, she would do Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) using bolsters or Salamba Sarvangasana (Supported Shoulderstand) with a chair. With these modifications, Walden was able to reap the benefits of inversions—relief from anxiety and irritability—without challenging or heating her body.

As Walden's symptoms diminished, her conviction that yoga could be a potent tool for easing the suffering that accompanies hormonal shifts deepened. She began to connect with other women who were experiencing similar difficulties and has since created specific yoga sequences for women with menopausal symptoms.

“I was interested in women's issues before,” says Walden, co-author with Linda Sparrowe of *The Woman's Book of Yoga and Health: A Lifelong Guide to Wellness*. “But after having gone through menopause myself, I am much more sensitive to it.”

A regular yoga practice can make a world of difference in a woman's experience of menopause. And a solid practice before this phase can ease the transition, says Suza Francina, author of *Yoga and the Wisdom of Menopause*. “If you practice yoga before menopause, then all the poses that are especially useful for coping with uncomfortable symptoms are already familiar, and you can reach for them like an old friend,” she says. “If you are familiar with restorative poses, then you have the best menopause medicine at your disposal.”

# Yoga Poses for Every Menopause Symptom

## HOT FLASHES

Here are descriptions of the most common symptoms and specific recommendations for taming them.

One of the most common (and mysterious) symptoms, hot flashes are experienced by nearly 80 percent of all women during perimenopause. Characterised by a rise in core body temperature coupled with a rapid pulse rate, these “power surges” produce a blushing that begins in the face and spreads down the neck and arms. Hot flashes can disappear as quickly as they appear, often leaving a woman feeling chilly and clammy as her body tries to correct the temperature fluctuation.

No one really knows what causes hot flashes, although theories abound. Some say the hypothalamus plays an important role; another possibility is that the hormonal fluctuations in the body irritate the blood vessels and nerve endings, causing the vessels to over-dilate and producing a hot, flushed feeling. Most researchers (as well as many menopausal women) agree that stress, fatigue, and intense periods of activity tend to intensify these episodes.

Walden suggests incorporating more cooling and restorative poses. Any gripping or tension in the body can make hot flashes worse, so using props such as bolsters, blankets, and blocks to help support the whole body is a good idea. Placing the head on a bolster or chair during forward bends, for example, helps calm the brain and relax the nerves. Supported reclining poses can also help promote complete relaxation. Reclining Bound Angle Pose and Reclining Hero Pose, for instance, allow the abdomen to soften and tightness in the chest and belly to release. Ardha Halasana (Half Plow Pose) with the legs resting on a chair calms jittery nerves.

## MEMORY

At times during menopause, some women suddenly lose their train of thought or find themselves unable to organise their thoughts. This “fuzzy” thinking often happens at moments of great hormonal fluctuation. Girls going through puberty, pregnant women, and those who have just given birth often suffer similar levels of fogginess. Many women find that yoga helps clear the cobwebs, especially if their condition is exacerbated by lack of sleep or increased agitation. The same postures that counter depression, such as backbends, chest openers, and inversions, can help collect fragmented thoughts, says Walden.

In addition, Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose) sends blood to the brain and encourages deep, focused breathing, which can improve mental alertness. And Savasana (Corpse Pose) soothes the nerves, calms the mind, and puts the body into a state of repose.

These asanas are just a sampling of the tools a woman can equip herself with as she journeys through menopause—and beyond. If you’ve never practiced before, yoga can be a tremendous aid when your body feels out of control. If your yoga has been a companion for years, you might find that this is a good time to modify your practice to give your body what it needs. Yoga’s rewards, after all, are lifelong. As Alison puts it, “I have received so many incredible benefits from yoga, especially during this period in my life. It has physically improved my body and mentally helped me with the ups and downs.”

## FATIGUE

*Of all the symptoms women complain about during perimenopause, fatigue is second only to hot flashes. Plunging progesterone could be the culprit, especially if the fatigue is coupled with depression and lethargy; if a woman feels inexplicably weary for days or weeks on end, depleted adrenal glands could be part of the problem.*

*Either way, Walden suggests gentle supported backbends because they encourage the chest and the heart to open and often bring renewed energy, determination, and joy. One of her favorites for this is Supta Baddha Konasana. A deeply restorative posture, it can instill feelings of safety and nourishment. It also opens the chest, improves respiration and circulation, and helps lift the spirits while completely supporting the body.*

# Anxiety, Irritability and Insomnia

During perimenopause, estrogen spikes (or progesterone plummets), causing anxiety, nervousness, and irritability. Adrenal glands that are exhausted and overtaxed can also produce bouts of anxiety and intense irritability. (Many alternative healers believe that the adrenals can wear themselves out by constantly responding to stress, a poor diet, and lack of sleep.)

When a person is under stress, the sympathetic nervous system responds by accelerating the heart rate, slowing down the muscles of the digestive tract, and increasing blood circulation to the brain to fight the stressor.

Once the stress dissipates, the parasympathetic nervous system responds by doing just the opposite—slowing the heart rate back to normal, stimulating the smooth muscles of the digestive tract, and bringing the body's systems back into balance.

When the body is under continual stress, the sympathetic nervous system and the adrenals—which manufacture stress-fighting hormones along with the male hormones that get converted into estrogen—can get stuck in overdrive.

Walden says forward bends, such as Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend) and Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide-Legged Standing Forward Bend)—in both cases with the head resting on a bolster or blankets—can help reduce irritability and mental tension, because bending forward and shutting out external distractions and stimuli can soothe the mind and reduce the effects of stress. The nervous system then receives the signal that all is well, and the adrenals and sympathetic nervous system stop working so hard.

If insomnia is a problem, inversions can sometimes help, because they ground the body's energy and burn off excess anxiety. When followed by restorative postures, they encourage a deep state of rest.



## Depression and Mood Swings

Menopause signals the end of the childbearing years; for many women, it is a time to mourn the end of their youth. Long periods of fatigue, coupled with a melancholy attitude or a sense that the life they once knew is now over, can trigger bouts of depression. Too much progesterone (or a drastic drop in estrogen) can also contribute to everything from a bad case of the blues to severe clinical depression.

But yoga practitioners have long known that everything you do with your body can affect your thoughts and attitude. Sometimes something as subtle as a shift in posture can lighten a dark mood. If a woman stands tall with dignity—opening and broadening her chest—and walks with confidence, she announces to the world (and, most important, to herself) that she is grounded, happy, and in tune with her surroundings.

Walden has found that specific poses create a mental state that positively affects the mind. "Backbends, especially if supported, allow a sense of lightness into the body," she says. "They stimulate the adrenals and massage them into action. Also, the heart and lungs open and take in more oxygen." Chest-expanding poses energise the body by improving respiration and circulation, and thus counter feelings of depression. And many yogis have discovered that inversions, such as Shoulderstand, can help improve a depressed mood. "By turning everything upside down, inversions influence your emotional being in a positive way," Walden says.

### SPECIAL YJ PROMOTION

### FREE SAMPLE

For a subject which will affect all women at some point in their lives, menopause and the period of time running up to it (known as peri-menopause or pre-menopause) is often surprisingly poorly understood. It's a time of significant change in women's bodies, sometimes accompanied by hot flushes, sleeplessness, changing moods and more. Another challenge is that women's menstrual flow changes, sometimes slowly or sometimes relatively quickly. Changes can include erratic periods and also, on occasions, unexpected and/or very heavy flow, sometimes with periods lasting longer than 'usual'.

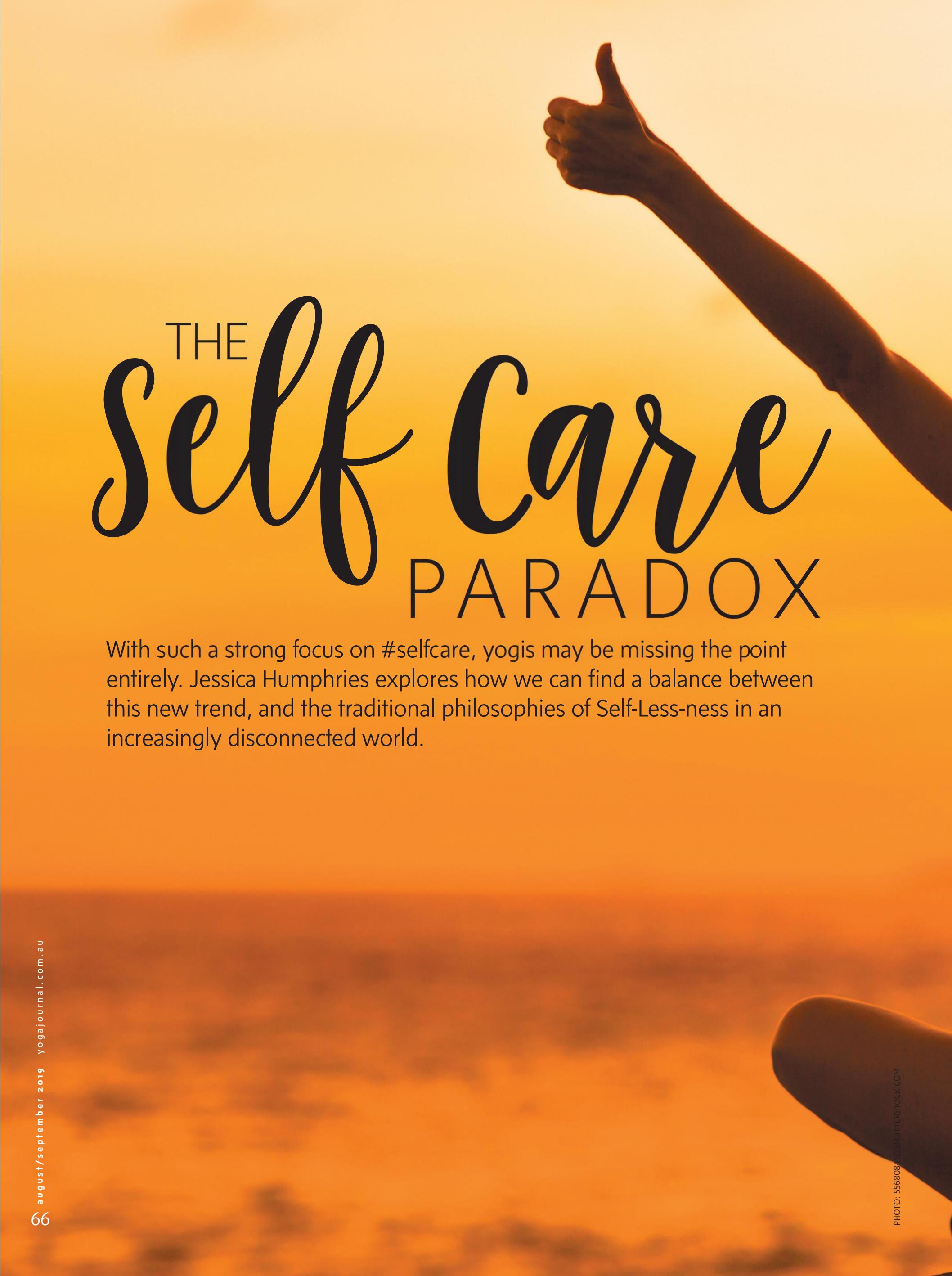
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# THE *self care* PARADOX

With such a strong focus on #selfcare, yogis may be missing the point entirely. Jessica Humphries explores how we can find a balance between this new trend, and the traditional philosophies of Self-Less-ness in an increasingly disconnected world.



**MY DAD ALWAYS SAID** that the truth makes hypocrites of us all. And yogis are no exception. I discover new layers of paradox every day as I immerse myself in this world. Insta-famous yogis flaunting their bikini clad Naturajasanas. So-called “gurus” sleeping their way through Wanderlust. Studios aggressively competing against one another. Teachers nit picking each other’s cueing and sequences.

Somewhere along the line, the yoga tradition has married philosophies that seem overly focussed on the self and spat out a new age/positive psychology/yoga hybrid that's often inconsistent and sometimes downright ridiculous. To me, the self-care phenomenon fits into this category. That's not to say I'm not a fan of an indulgent spa session or a gentle reminder to myself that I am worthy. But an extreme focus on the self takes our attention away from the things that actually make us feel happy and fulfilled: helping others and having a sense of community. Likewise, tell someone who is genuinely suffering from mental health challenges to go take a long bath or recite some affirmations and you may end up exacerbating the problem.

Having said that, something like a yoga or meditation practice as an act of what we now call 'self-care' can be absolutely essential for creating the space one needs in order to sift through the contents of the brain and find some clarity and stillness. But that doesn't mean you need to head off to Bali for

another teacher training. In fact, self-care, from a truly yogic perspective, goes beyond individuality and embraces the self as a part of something infinitely greater.

### THE PARADOX OF SELF-CARE IN THE YOGA WORLD: ISN'T YOGA ABOUT RENOUNCING THE EGO OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

The strong focus on the self in the modern yoga world perplexes me. Yoga is supposed to be about letting go of the self, and seeing that there is no separation; we are all one. One of my most influential yoga philosophy teachers, Swami Pujan ([www.pujanyoga.com](http://www.pujanyoga.com)), a long time yoga philosophy teacher, meditator and author of *Advaita Vendanta for Ordinary People*, agrees.

He explains that traditional yoga philosophies were all aimed at liberating oneself from the ignorance of our separation. He says, "Indian tradition was never about the individual, but about the family and your connection with your wider community. The aim of yoga was to contribute and not to

enhance your individuality." When it came to teachings of the Self, it was all about the realisation of the separate self as the universal self. Contrastingly, modern yoga, he says, "is built around the idea that you need to strengthen your individuality and that is, of course, a reflection of our society which is built on individualism."

Lissie Turner, a long time yoga teacher, yoga therapist, and owner of The Yoga Shack ([theyogashack.com.au](http://theyogashack.com.au)) in the Byron Shire agrees that yoga is not an easy path, and its association with self-care could be damaging. Yoga asks for attention, dedication and commitment. It requires us to confront hidden parts of ourselves and sometimes to change, and that can be really hard work.

True yoga, she says, "is utilising this work and this willingness to truly look at where we are within, our own prejudices, interpretations and shortcomings that are causing people's suffering with a deep determination to dismantle those things." When we put yoga under the self-care umbrella, we make it a luxury, a symbol of the privileged, and something to feel guilty about having time for—not an essential part of our lives and spiritual practice. She says, "We must, as teachers, become committed in looking at how this has happened and undo that story."

### THE DANGERS OF SELF-CARE

It's okay to take time to yourself, to assert healthy boundaries in relationships and indulge once in a while. In fact, these things may all be essential to your physical, mental and emotional health. But being overly attached to the idea of the self can become unhealthy. Swami Pujan points out that connection with others can be lost when we're too focused on ourselves. He says, "Forms of narcissism develop like constant Instagram photos of yourself. Obsession with physical appearance can take the place of genuine caring and community."

Sarah Ball ([www.sarahball.com.au](http://www.sarahball.com.au)) is a mental-health focused yoga teacher and a social worker who knows all too well the downside of focusing on self-care as a solution to a much greater problem. She explains that we need to view both distress and healing in a larger context, rather than isolating ourselves – which is often at



the heart of the issue. She says, “If our distress arises in the context of social issues of disconnection—such as isolation, poverty, disconnection from meaningful work, overwork, toxic environments (either literal or psychological), interpersonal trauma... the list goes on—then having our conversation in the yoga and wellbeing community focusing on ‘self-care’ as the primary pathway to healing, is doing a great disservice to ourselves and others.”

Of course a level of caring for the self is essential. But we are relational creatures who need interconnectivity – something that yoga teaches us. However, self-care sells where community care doesn’t. Sarah explains that when our self-care solutions fail to produce real healing, “we need to remember that this is not the failure of the individual, or a call for even more self-care (which can lead to an obsessive loop of feeling like a failure for not healing), but a call to collective and creative solutions.” The very least we can do, she says, is to “have honest conversations so we can reduce the

shame so many yoga practitioners feel when their self-care fails to ‘heal’ issues which are far more complex than the individual.”

### DISCOVERING TRUE SELF-CARE

Scroll through your social media feed or do a quick Google search and you’ll find endless stories and images of self-care that are primarily related to pampering the body or rehearsing positive affirmations in front of the mirror. But truly caring for the self, particularly in the context of yoga, is far more than this.

Swami Pujan says, “Yoga was never just a body care—it was a path to Self realisation. The first Kosha is our physical body and most students stop there. But as we know...we have four more Koshas that are covering who we really are. Self-care should really include deeper dimensions as well. Only then can yoga deliver what it promises: freedom from limited beliefs and realisation of our true nature.”

If enlightenment is realising that we are all one, or part of a greater Self, then true self-care should take into consideration the society as a

whole—even in the context of individual healing. That’s not to say that we shouldn’t focus on healing our own wounds—but that it should be a part of a greater conversation that’s less focused on ‘me.’

For Lissie, and for most of us in the yoga world, true healing comes through the discovery of our life’s true purpose, and that often has little to do with what is commonly called ‘self-care’. She says, “If we ask ourselves the question: does this action feed my dharma [life-purpose] or distract me from it, we will find all the self-care we need.”

Getting a good stretch and feeling relaxed are great side effects of our yoga practice, but should not be the goal. Perhaps if we slowed down enough to see this then there wouldn’t be a need for all this damage control.

We could create the space, through a dedicated and committed practice (whatever that looks like for you) to see that we don’t need to ‘fix’ ourselves to be happy and fulfilled. We simply need to focus our drishti (gaze) on the bigger picture: each other.

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# Back Care Basics

Don't miss these strategies for supporting spinal health and keeping pain at bay.

By Mary Richards



**BACK PAIN IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON MEDICAL PROBLEMS,** affecting 8 out of 10 people, according to the National Institutes of Health. The good news? Yoga-based therapeutics are affordable and accessible ways to alleviate and prevent back pain—acute or chronic—by improving the quality of your movements and by helping the left, right, front, and back sides of your body work together in a balanced way, on and off the mat.

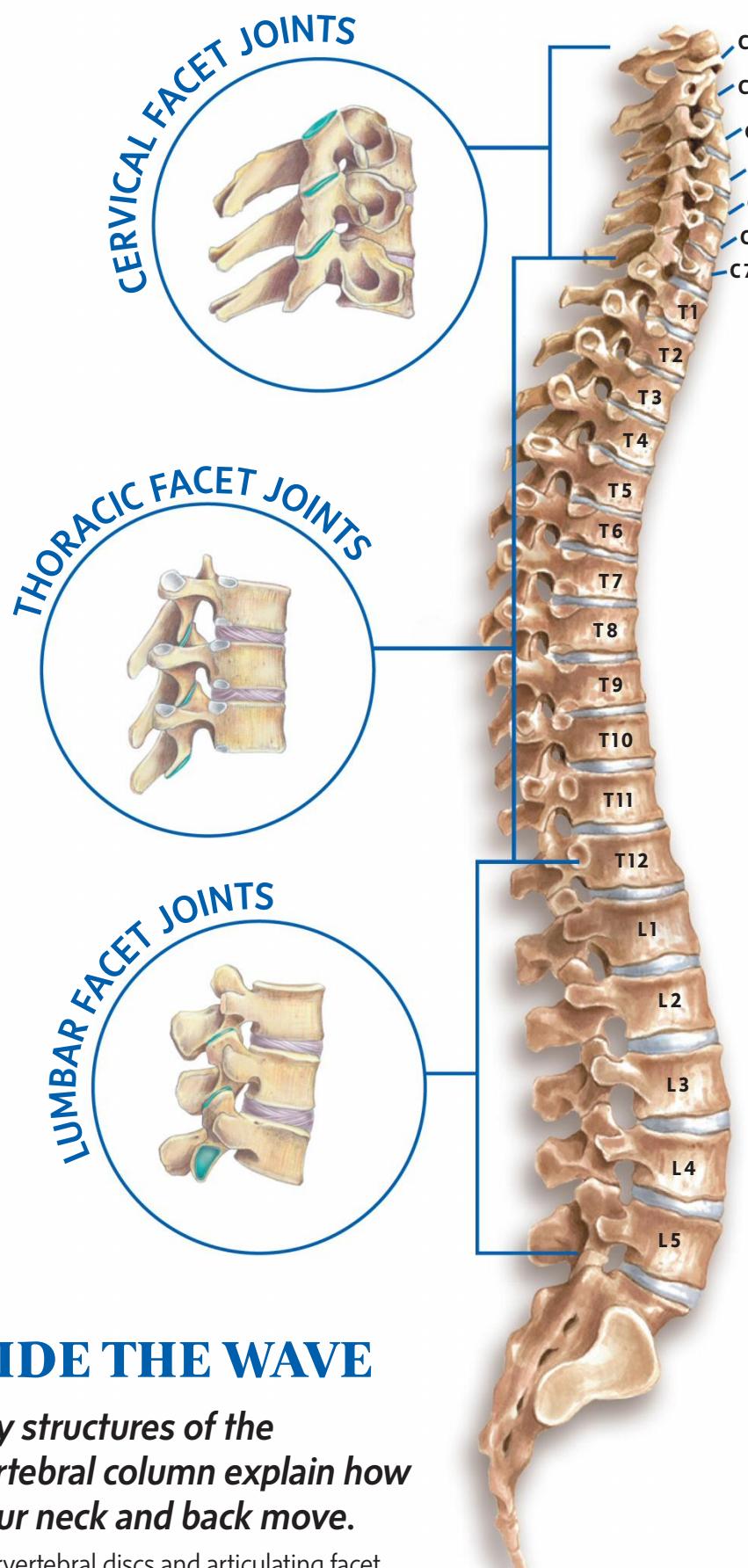
First, it's critical to understand good posture and put it to use; poor posture often leads to back pain. You can figure out if your vertebral column and pelvis are neutral—critical to good posture—by using several benchmarks. To learn, let's look at Tadasana (Mountain Pose).

- **THE VERTEBRAL COLUMN** is most stable when aligned in its normal curves. Generally speaking, and in relation to the front of the body, the neck and low back display concave curves (lordosis), while the upper and middle back together display a convex curve (kyphosis), as does the sacrum.
- **THE SACRUM** is a curved, bumpy bone that angles in toward the body at about 30 degrees, beginning at L5/S1; it does not point straight down.
- **THE PELVIC RIM**, or iliac crest, which marks the top of the pelvis, is fairly level.
- **THE PLUMB LINE** runs from the centre of the ear opening (external auditory meatus), through the shoulder, outer hip (greater trochanter), outer knee, and outer ankle (lateral malleolus).
- **THE CAVITIES** ("open" spaces) of your pelvis, belly, chest, and head feel balanced in relation to each other.

Once you understand proper posture, consider two key questions during asana practice: does a body part need space? Does a body part need support? It could need both. Begin by creating space: reduce the size of a movement or pose. For example, someone who habitually sits with a flattened or rounded back often experiences pain in back extensions. That means simply standing with normal curves might feel like a backbend; thus, Tadasana is the first backbending pose for them. Sometimes creating support helps: Instead of practicing Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) with the pelvis lifted, do it with a folded blanket supporting the

bottom of the shoulder blades to the hips.

Bear in mind that seated asana are more likely to cause back injuries than standing, supine, or prone asana, if your posture is poor or you're unable to engage the muscles of your legs and buttocks. Avoid them entirely if you have low back pain or disc injuries, and instead do other poses that achieve similar ends. For example, to stretch the hamstrings, practice Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose) instead of Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend). If you have a disc injury or sacroiliac joint dysfunction, avoid forward folds and twists, especially seated twists. It's much safer to adapt twists to standing. Marichyasana (Pose Dedicated to the Sage Marichi) can be practiced with a chair at the wall, for instance. If you practice seated twists, you must allow your pelvis to move in order to maintain the form and force closure of the sacroiliac joints and to spread compression more evenly through the intervertebral discs. Bharadvajasana can be a safe seated twist, as long as the pelvis is not anchored to the floor. Gentle, small-range back extensions may help reduce disc-related pain and dysfunction. Salabhasana (Locust Pose) can be useful for developing strength in the back body and reducing load in the low back. It can be practiced with asymmetry to reduce strain and gradually build strength.



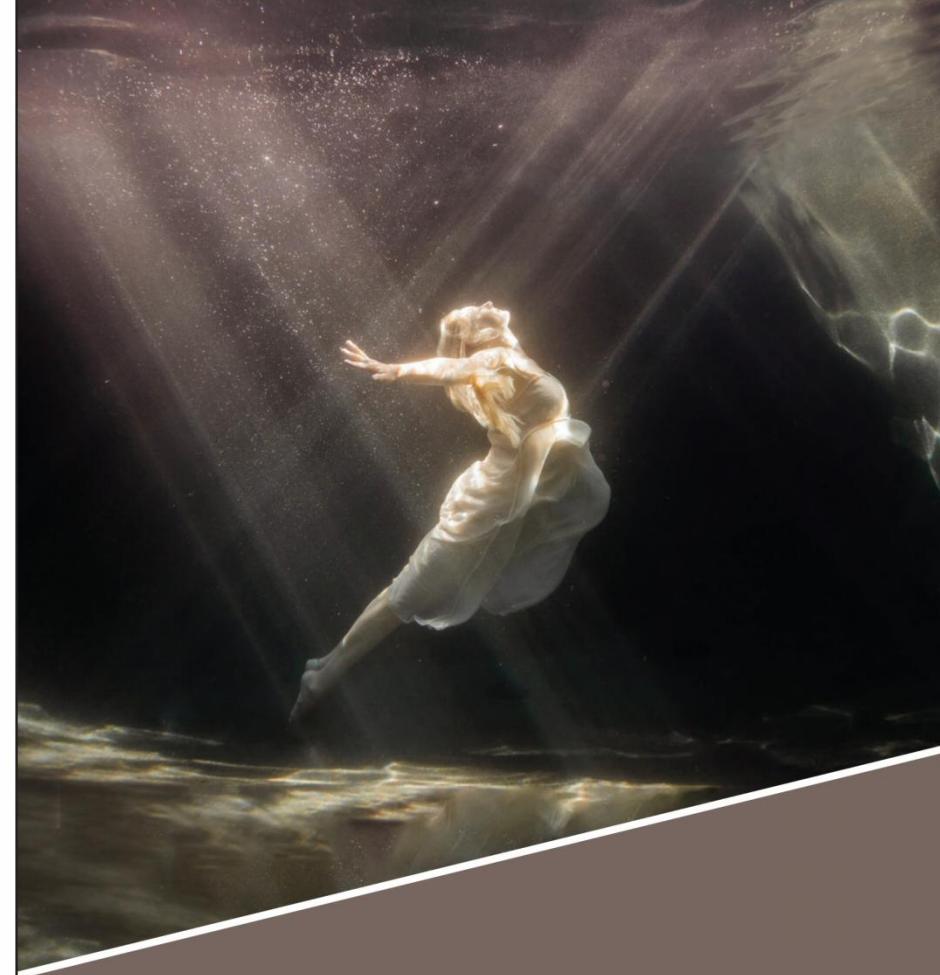
## RIDE THE WAVE

**Key structures of the vertebral column explain how your neck and back move.**

Intervertebral discs and articulating facet joints, shown above (in blue circles) separate each moveable spinal segment of the vertebral column (except C1/C2). The discs create space between the vertebral bodies, allowing range of motion. The facet joints are bony connections between each vertebral body that guide direction of movement. They become more vertically oriented as you travel down the vertebral column. Generally, the more vertically oriented the facet joint is, the less range of motion you have in side-bending and rotation. Facet joints have a specific orientation in each region of the vertebral column:

- **CERVICAL:** Almost horizontal. This orientation allows for a high degree of mobility, which is why the neck is capable of flexion, extension, side-bending, and rotation—as independent and coupled movements.
- **THORACIC:** Almost vertical. This orientation allows for a high degree of rotation (limited by the rib cage), as well as flexion and some extension.
- **LUMBAR:** Vertical. This orientation allows for a high degree of flexion and extension, with limited side-bending and rotation.

Neighbouring upper and lower facet joints differ in orientation at the spine's three transitional segments, creating greater directional movement capability—and more potential for injury: C7/T1, T12/L1, L5/S1.



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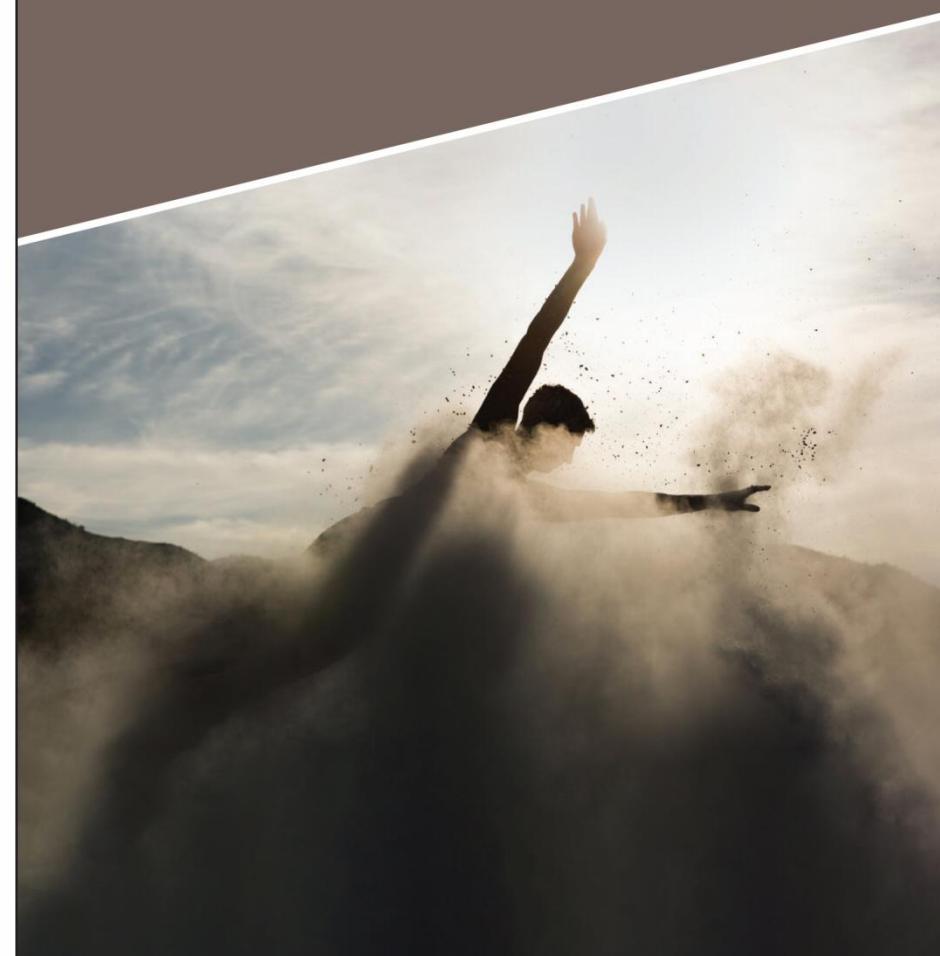
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200h RYT Foundational Yoga Teacher Training  
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Ananda Cottages, Ubud Bali  
300h RYT Advanced Yoga Teacher Training

Body  
December  
5 - 16

Mind  
December  
19 - 30

Expression  
January  
2 - 13



## CLASS SMARTS

### Dialogue between yoga teachers and students helps prevent back injuries.

**STUDENTS:** If you have been diagnosed with bulging or herniated discs, or experience radiating pain, numbness, tingling, or chronic muscle tightness, tell your yoga teacher before class. It is helpful to know the segmental level of an injury; for example, a bulging disc at L5/S1. Symptoms of numbness and tingling are of particular concern because they can indicate nerve damage that may affect function. Also share how long you've experienced symptoms and when you were evaluated by a

licensed health care provider. If you do not have a diagnosis, please visit your doctor before you begin any yoga classes, especially if your pain is acute or has lasted longer than three months. Keep in mind that yoga teachers are not licensed health care providers. And health care workers who teach yoga abide by the ethical and professional boundaries created by their scope of practice, and do not diagnose on the mat.

**TEACHERS:** If a student says they feel pain, numbness, or tingling, take them at their word. If you don't know how to proceed, teach what you know with an explicit invitation to opt out, or refer the student to a more experienced instructor with expertise in asana-based therapeutics (and continue to study anatomy, kinesiology, and asana-based therapeutics; education is empowering, so nerd it up!).

***Time is on your side when working with back pain or disc injuries. Patience, diligence, and gentleness guide the path to safe movement. The back-care series I developed promotes range of motion, body balance, and alleviates discomfort from sitting with poor posture. Try to practice it daily, especially when you have spent prolonged periods sitting or standing.***

- **MARJARYASANA + BITILASANA:**

Repeat all variations to your content. Cat/Cow: Flex and extend the spine by initiating movement from the hips (shown). Side-bend Cat/Cow: Side bend right, then left, squeezing the side waist like a fist. Rotation Cat/Cow: Shift weight to your left hand and lift the right arm laterally, by rotating the rib cage, then repeat on the opposite side. Keep your chin in line with your sternum.



**MARJARYASANA**

Cat Pose



**BITILASANA**

Cow Pose

- **DHANURASANA:** Lie on your belly with your legs behind you, prop yourself up on your right forearm, bend your left knee, and use a strap to hook the front of your left ankle. Look at a spot on the floor ahead of you, draw your shoulder blades toward your midline, roll your back and lower ribs in and up, and keep a light tailbone. Hold for 3-4 breaths, then repeat on the other side. Take full Bow, if appropriate for you, and hold for at least 3-6 breaths. Work up to holding for as long as you like.



**DHANURASANA**

Bow Pose variation



**SUPPORTED SIDE-LYING**

Cow Pose

- **BOLSTER/BLANKET-SUPPORTED SIDE-LYING:**

Sit perpendicular to a bolster or blanket that's at your hip. Side bend over the prop(s), gently turning your chest and head toward the ceiling. Support your head and neck with a block, and adjust your top arm as needed. Take at least 12-16 breaths and work up to 36-48 breaths (about 4 minutes). Switch sides.



**DEROTATIONAL PLANKS**

- **DEROTATIONAL PLANKS:** Come to Forearm Plank, then place one forearm down ahead of the other a few inches.

Take 3-10 breaths. Return to traditional Forearm Plank and do the exercise with the other forearm. Rest, then repeat 2 times. To modify, drop your knees during the exercise or when you return to traditional Forearm Plank. (An optional strap above the elbows stabilizes the shoulders.)

- **PELVIC CLOCKS:** Lie on your back and place your soles ahead of your hips, with your arms comfortably at your sides. Lift your pelvis just enough to clear the mat. Visualize a clock face under your hips, and touch every hour with your buttocks, moving clockwise then counterclockwise. Repeat 4-6 times.



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# USE YIN

## and Traditional Chinese Medicine to Recharge Your Body to 100% this Winter

A reinvigorating yin yoga sequence for winter health, fertility and vitality.

By Mel McLaughlin

**IMAGINE IF YOU TREATED YOUR BODY** the same way you treated your phone when it was low on power. I admit, I'm the first to search frantically for a power charger when my phone is even close to running out of juice, but have ignored this feeling within my own body. A few years ago, I did this so much I was overwhelmed with chronic fatigue symptoms and burnout. The trouble is, we all treat it as an emergency when our phones or laptops are about to die. Yet few of us take as good care of our very own body's 'batteries' (which are the kidneys) as we do our electronics. If we did, we'd have more vitality, and much healthier winters. And as a consequence, a happier and more vital springtime.

Any time your body needs an energy 'boost' the kidneys comply, until they can't. It's similar to withdrawing out of a

savings account until you're in the red, then the body gives us its bill.

Winter time in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the season of the yin organ, the kidney, and its partner the yang organ, the urinary bladder. Its element is water and the colour of blue and black. Every organ pair has a season, an element and a sense organ, and our kidneys sense organ is our ears. When we practice in alignment with the season we are in sync with nature and supported to do this particular work. (It doesn't mean you can't do kidney practices in summer and sometimes that can be highly beneficial.) It's just that as human we are a part of nature and in the natural flow with what's happening in our environment.

We have one of our most treasured QIs stored in our kidneys (Qi being energy). Called Jing Qi, it is treasured

because in part it's ancestral and passed down through conception from parents, but also because it relates to our longevity and ageing. The following practices of yin yoga—stretching and compressing the kidney/bladder lines—keep us youthful, vibrant and fertile, literally on a cellular level. Also, by stimulating or releasing the tensions, blockages and stagnations in these channels, the very intelligent life force we call Qi runs more smoothly through the tissues to the corresponding organ and nourishes and balances our psycho-somatic tendencies in each particular organ pair as well as their physical health.

This medicine works both ways: physical to emotional and vice versa. For example, if we have an imbalance in our kidneys and bladder we may experience feelings of dread or fear of change or be overly ambitious to the detriment of anyone or anything around us. This may show up in physical ailments like a weak or sore lower back, or ear problems or bone, fertility or libido issues. And if we are having physical kidney or bladder problems—for example a urinary tract infection or kidney stones or we are overwhelming our kidneys with a high salt diet or lack of sleep—it may show up as insomnia down the track, unfounded fears around safety, or a lack motivation. It's a two-way street. One of the things I love about sister science to yin yoga - TCM - is the ability to look at the person and treat them as whole being: mind, body and spirit. Not just as separate parts.

This Jing Qi of the kidneys (our bodies' batteries if you like) is our *fundamental energy* and we are given a limited supply—some of us get great 'inheritance' and some of us not so great 'inheritance' from our parents, but lifestyle choices make a huge difference to how we spend or conserve and spread this energy throughout our lives.

## LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Some people with a very healthy inheritance of Jing Qi may squander this energy constantly by burning the candle at both ends and having lots of meaningless sex (the kidneys have a special relationship to the heart), not hydrating enough and not getting enough rest.

While others may not have the wealthiest ancestral Jing Qi but are wise in their choices by living less stressful lives. They sleep well, they honour rest and are well hydrated, have a sense of belonging and hold a healthy ambition or purpose in life.

Without this nourishing essence and with our kidneys out of balance we can feel afraid of life and its challenges and have an inability to cope with change or have enough creative or fertile energy in order to follow our healthy ambitions and dreams.

**"Some people with a healthy inheritance of Jing Qi may squander it by burning the candle at both ends and having lots of meaningless sex..."**

It can also mean a lack of (or overuse) of our libido and a feeling of being untethered or ungrounded. In Western medicine it's the same just from a different perspective. It's related to our hormones adrenalin and cortisol, commonly known as the 'stress hormones'. When we are in fight-and-flight mode associated with survival, perceived or real, over and over without adequate recovery, there is very little energy left for dreaming or creating, and very little Qi to keep us youthful in both body (face) and spirit.

Winter gives us a hibernating permission slip. It's one season where cosying up and resting is totally acceptable but what most of us don't realise is that this is more than rest, its rest in preparation for Spring. It is active rest. Could we let winter take us to places that other seasons don't?

Yin yoga allows a certain 'rest and digest' aspect of our nervous systems as we take long poses in a calm and relaxed way. You can expect to feel a drop in what I like to call 'Revving', which is the always-on life. You will feel your body as it is, without making extra demands or forcing it any way to be a certain way. This has a very pleasant knock-on effect of feeling safe in our own bodies, innately gentle and open.

This is your time to unwind tensions, stresses and sometimes deeply held memories in a tender yet empowered way. You are always in control, and are

simply giving some breathing space to what is there and so also the potential for change within that sensation, tissue, emotion or thought.

The energy of winter is traditionally dark, cold, slow, inward energy like the sap of the tree that has retreated down the trunk in autumn. It descends deeper into the roots and the tree looks dead but really, it's just slowed down to a deep sleep in order to be able to rise up again in spring with enough energy to make new life.

The next chapter/life season always depends on the one before to set it up well. So here is a sequence for winter that will restore your energy as if you've been plugged into a charger and your batteries are all green and at 100%.

## HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A YIN OR RESTORATIVE TRAINING

Both Yin and Restorative Yoga have grown in popularity - as stand alone classes, as the cool-down element of general classes and as the first choice for a home practice. Joining a Yin or Restorative training is a great way for yoga teachers to add to their teaching tool kit or for any yogi to establish their own slow and passive practice. But which to choose?

The main difference is that in Restorative you are completely supported and relaxed, often by utilising lots of props, while Yin Yoga emphasises healthy stress and some level of discomfort to work into ligaments and fascia.

Restorative Yoga is ideal for practitioners seeking relaxation, healing or a profound sense of letting go. Yin Yoga is best for those looking for deep stretching, to create change and openings in muscles and ligaments or as a way to release tension or blockages.

For more information on the difference head to Byron Yoga Centre's Yogi Wisdom website. Byron Yoga Centre runs both Yin and Restorative trainings. The next Yin course is 2-7 September and Restorative is 10-13 October [www.byronyoga.com](http://www.byronyoga.com).



## 1 CATERPILLAR

**HOW TO** Sit comfortably on your sit bones with straight legs out in front in a way that's easy for you, inhale and lengthen your spine and as you exhale lean, then bow forward over your legs. You can reach your arms or just let them be resting on legs or floor with relaxed shoulders. Hold for 3-5 mins.

**BENEFITS** Caterpillar pose stretches the superficial back line of fascia which houses all the muscles on the back of the body and the kidney and bladder channels. As it stretches these lines we feel relief through the entire back body feet to neck when we release the pose, and it gives the Qi the opportunity move through and clears out and balances the channels and organs in a yin/yang way. This is an introspective and calming pose.

**TIPS** Use props where you need them (backs of knees, or under sits bones or supporting forehead/neck etc)



## 2 TWISTED ROOTS

**HOW TO** Lay on your back and bend up your knees feet flat to the floor. Casually cross your legs right over left and drop your legs slowly over to the left. As you do this reach your arms out wide and rest them on the floor. Stay for 3-5mins. Rest in the middle before repeating on the opposite side.

**BENEFITS** This gently stimulates the entire spine particularly where both the kidney and urinary bladder channels. It keeps a healthy rotation aspect to the spine and can release tension across the lumbar spine and opens up the chest.

**TIPS** Use props under knees to ease any fragility in the lower back.



## 3 BUTTERFLY RECLINED OVER BOLSTER

**HOW TO** Organise your bolster behind you either longways mirroring spine (more supportive) or across upper back (deeper) and let your head hang backwards onto the floor or a block. Let your arms open wide to the sides and breathe deeply. 3-5mins hold.

**BENEFITS** Gently stimulates the tissues of the spine that include the kidney and urinary bladder channels. Allows an openness of the heart and a capacity for a deep breathe. Can reverse rounded shoulder syndrome and open us back up to life.

**TIPS** Use props to support the upper back/outer knees and head if needed.

## 4 DRAGONFLY ON THE WALL

**HOW TO** Lie on the floor close to a wall and put your legs up the wall opening them wide to the sides. Rest your legs on the wall and if its possible raise your arms overhead. Hold for 3-5mins.

**BENEFITS** Stretches deeply into the inner and back thighs and Kidney channel and allows deep supported rest of the entire spine. A calming and nourishing pose for the entire body.

**TIPS** Using props under sacrum for uncomfortable hip compression or deepening your range, and outer thighs for modifying and any knee issues.

## 5 LEGS UP THE WALL

**HOW TO** Stay in the same position for dragonfly at the wall and simply draw one leg at a time up the wall together(ish) still relaxed and leaning against the wall for 1 to 5mins. Slowly hug the knees to chest to finish and roll sideways to sit up.

**BENEFITS** Legs up the wall is a great counterpose to dragonfly and an all-round go-to pose to rest the lower body. Inverted, working with gravity, the pose helps fluid flow in the lower body, allowing you to concentrate on breath and prepare yourself for pentacle pose.

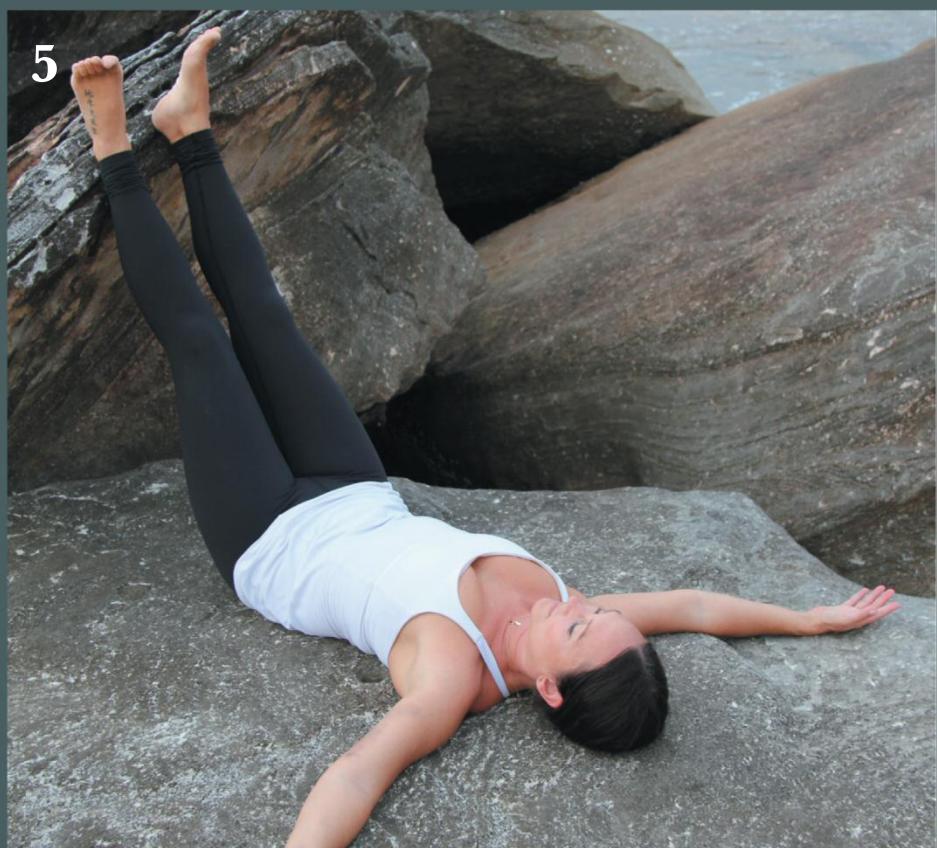
**TIPS** Put a block under pelvis if you need to ease any hip compression that feels uncomfortable. An eye pillow here allows for a deeper, stiller rest.

## 6 PENTACLE

**HOW TO** Lay down in a spacious star shape. You can choose to have your hands resting on your body and 'short-circuit' your Qi back in containment or spread out and no body part touching another body part and let Qi and fluids circulate freely throughout your body as you rest. Minimum 5 mins or longer.

**BENEFITS** This is the ultimate restorative and nurturing yin pose. A hibernation briefly into the deepest parts of ourselves and our ability to fully release and deeply relax. We remember here what deep relaxation means and how it affects us positively.

**TIPS** Put the bolster under the backs of your knees for lower back support or over your hips for grounded rest. Use an eye pillow as it allows your nervous system to balance and for you to withdraw a little more deeply into the centre of yourself and with less visual stimulation, drift away into a peaceful and easy relaxation.

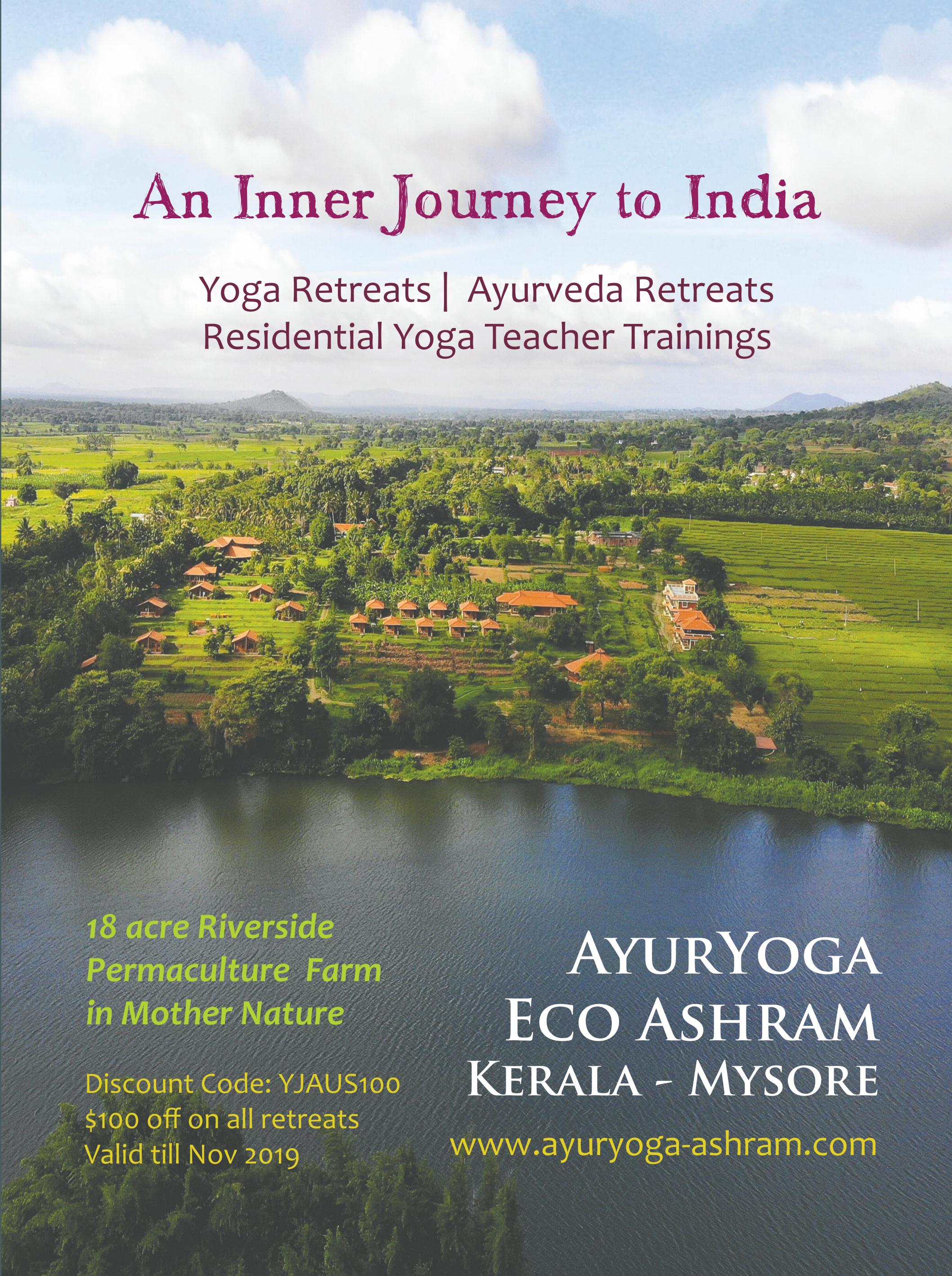


## WAYS TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE KIDNEY ORGANS & WINTER SEASON

- Keep the soles of your feet and lower back warm
- Eat hydrating warming foods (ginger, garlic bone broths, warming teas )
  - Go to bed earlier and sleep longer
  - Take long warm epsom salt baths and foot baths.
- Keep your water 'fluid' – hydration and movement are still key here – find a winter way to do this
  - Practice slower forms of nourishing exercise like Qi Gong ,Yin yoga, Tai chi, walking.
- Use practices like meditation/yoga nidra and journaling, to help connect with your inner self.

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# FOOD for THOUGHT

Like intellectual stimulation or meditation, the right diet can make a dramatic difference in smarts and mood—today, and years down the road. Here's how to fuel your way to clearer, happier thinking.

STORY BY JANIS JIBRIN | RECIPES BY JENNIFER ISERLOH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER OLSON



**IN ORDER FOR YOU** to read this article, fall in love, get into Extended Triangle Pose, breathe, or even just exist, billions of neurons (nerve cells) in the brain are in a constant state of giving and receiving messages to and from each other. In fact, the neurons' reach and exchange of messages extend throughout your entire body. Message pings like "Hand, please grab the steering wheel" or "Hey, it's your neuron neighbour, sending over serotonin so we can feel good" are sent every millisecond of every day.

To power this infinitely complex system, your brain recruits a whopping 20 percent of your caloric intake (though at 1.5 kilograms it comprises a mere 2 percent of your body weight).

To keep you sharp, brain cells rely on an army of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. For example, magnesium ensures that messages are exchanged between neurons so you can learn and create memories

Unfortunately, half of Americans aren't getting enough magnesium, and we're likewise falling short on other

nutrients critical to brain health. "A nutritious diet can make you sharper, help stave off depression and dementia, and even reduce the amount your brain shrinks as a natural part of aging," says Dr. Drew Ramsey, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York and author of *Eat Complete*. "But the typical Western diet of highly processed foods made of refined carbs, excess sugars, and the wrong fats does just the opposite. In

continued on page 42



## Complete tomatoes and eggs with kale pesto

In addition to supplying you with vitamin B12, eggs are high in choline, a nutrient that forms one of the principal brain neurotransmitters involved in learning and memory. Plus, tomatoes and kale supply brain-cell-protecting vitamin C, and pumpkin seeds are chockfull of attention-supporting iron, as well as magnesium to keep brain messages pinging at top speed.

### SERVES 4

- 2 large tomatoes (about 500g), halved and seeded**
- 4 organic pasture-raised eggs**
- 2 tbsp pumpkin seeds**
- 2 cups kale**
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil**
- ½ tsp salt**
- 1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper**

Heat oven to 200°. Place tomatoes close together, cut-side up, on a baking sheet lined with aluminium foil or parchment paper. Crack an egg into each tomato half. Bake until the edges of the eggs start to firm and the whites are cooked though, 15–20 minutes.

While the eggs are cooking, prepare the pesto. In a food processor or mini chopper, chop pumpkin seeds. Add kale, and pulse until finely chopped. Add olive oil, 2 tbsp water, salt, and black pepper; pulse until combined yet chunky. Top eggs with pesto and serve.

### NUTRITIONAL INFO

211 calories per serving, 18 g fat (3 g saturated), 6 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 9 g protein, 202 mg sodium

# BRAIN NUTRIENTS

While every vitamin and mineral is essential to brain health, those in the chart below have the most direct and immediate effects on brain function says Dr. Drew Ramsey, author of *Eat Complete*. But he's quick to add, "There's no single vitamin or miracle food—not even kale—that's going to boost brain health. It's your overall dietary pattern." So be sure to eat a Mediterranean diet that incorporates a variety of foods from this list.

NUTRIENT	BENEFIT	TOP SOURCES*
B12	Critical to all cells, B12 converts protein and fat into energy, and is involved in other reactions that keep brain cells intact. Fall short, and you could see a slip in memory, a dip in mood, possible dementia, or even psychosis; if the deficit goes on too long, it can cause permanent brain damage. At age 50, get a blood test for B12, as age-related changes can make it harder to absorb this vitamin. Thirty percent of US adults over age 60 are deficient.	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Clams, crab, mussels, oysters (Eastern and Pacific), rainbow trout, salmon, sardines <b>RICH</b> Beef; extra-large eggs; most fish (flounder, halibut, tilapia, rockfish); nonfat (skim) milk; plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt; some cheeses (mozzarella, Swiss, 1% cottage cheese) <b>NOTE</b> B12 occurs naturally in foods of animal origin only, so vegans should talk with their doctors about a supplement.
Dietary Fibre	Intriguing new research is indicating that the bacteria in our gut could influence mood. One of their favourite foods: fibre!	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Beans, such as black and kidney; blackberries, pears, and raspberries; high-fibre cereal; high-fibre crackers, such as a whole-grain rye crispbread; whole grains, such as bulgur wheat, quinoa, and wheat berries <b>RICH</b> Asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower; most fruit, such as apples, bananas, oranges, peaches, and strawberries; nuts and seeds, particularly almonds and sunflower seeds; oatmeal
Folate (folic acid is the synthetic form found in vitamin supplements)	This B vitamin helps make DNA, which means it's critical to every cell, including those in the brain. In addition, it has a hand in producing neurotransmitters (chemical messengers found throughout the brain and body). A deficiency can cause the same symptoms as a lack of B12 (more than a third of people hospitalized for psychiatric reasons are deficient in folate or B12).	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Black beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils, spinach <b>RICH</b> Romaine lettuce
Iron	This mineral carries oxygen to brain cells (as part of hemoglobin in your blood). Being short on iron can make it harder to pay attention and even temporarily lower your IQ, as well as leave you fatigued. (But be careful: Too much iron in supplement form can harm the brain.)	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Super-rich beef liver, mussels, Pacific oysters <b>RICH</b> Black beans, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils, non-Pacific oysters, pumpkin seeds
Magnesium	Magnesium helps brain cells communicate with each other. Low levels of this mineral have been linked with depression and addiction.	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Pumpkin seeds <b>RICH</b> Almonds, cashews, oat bran, wheat bran
Omega-3 fish oils (DHA and EPA)	DHA, one of the omega-3s in fatty fish, helps neurons communicate better and tamps down inflammation. Since we make very little DHA, we need to get it from food. DHA—along with the other main fish oil, EPA—also helps keep the arteries leading to the brain clear, reducing the risk of stroke.	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Fatty fish like Arctic char, mackerel, salmon, sardines, and trout; also, oysters and some of the leaner fish, such as halibut and rockfish <b>RICH</b> Most white-fleshed, leaner fish, such as catfish, cod, and tilapia
Vitamin C	As an antioxidant, it protects brain cells from DNA-destroying free radicals; vitamin C is also involved in creating neurotransmitters and building the brain's blood vessels.	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cantaloupe, cauliflower, grapefruit, kale, kiwi, oranges, papaya, and strawberries <b>RICH</b> Potatoes, tomatoes
Zinc	Zinc helps form the many proteins, enzymes, and other building blocks for a healthy brain, and helps neurons communicate properly. A shortage is linked to dementia and depression.	<b>SUPER-RICH</b> Alaskan king crab, oysters <b>RICH</b> Black-eyed peas, beef, lobster, other types of crab, pork tenderloin, tofu

\*"Super-rich" sources offer 40 percent or more of the daily value per single reasonable serving: 2–3 oz animal protein;  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup tofu; 1 cup milk, yogurt, or cottage cheese; 2 oz cheese; about 1 cup fruit or cut-up vegetables; 2–3 cups greens;  $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 cup legumes, grains, or potatoes; or 1 oz crackers or nuts. "Rich" sources offer between 20 and 40 percent, except for fiber (5-plus grams per serving is super-rich; 3–5 grams is rich). There is no daily value for omega-3s.



### MEDITERRANEAN DIET BASICS

- » Rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and seeds
- » Moderate amounts of fish, dairy, eggs, and alcohol
- » Low levels of red meat, saturated fat, and added sugar
- » Extra-virgin olive oil is the primary fat

## Lemony trout with quinoa-bean salad

Trout is a super-rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which help nerve cells in the brain communicate better and may keep the arteries that service the brain clear. Plus, this meal gives you a whopping 12 grams of satiating, gut-friendly fibre per serving—about 40 percent of your daily recommended value—thanks in part to black beans, which are also super-rich in folate, a nutrient critical for general brain-cell function.

**SERVES 4**

- 2** **tbsp** **olive oil, divided**
- 2** **garlic cloves, minced**
- 1** **teaspoon** **seasoning salt, such as Old Bay**
- 1** **can (400g) low-sodium black beans, rinsed and drained**
- 1** **cup** **quinoa, cooked according to the package instructions**
- 2** **lemons, zested and juiced, divided**
- ½** **cup** **chopped cilantro**
- 4** **trout fillets (100g each)**
- ¼** **cup** **capers, drained**
- ¼** **teaspoon** **freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼** **cup** **chopped almonds**

Heat oven to 180°. In a large skillet over medium heat, warm 1 tbsp olive oil; add garlic and seasoning salt and cook until garlic starts to brown, 2–3 minutes. Stir in beans and quinoa; cook 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in half the lemon zest and half the juice, plus cilantro.

On a baking sheet covered with aluminium foil, place trout skin-side down and sprinkle each fillet with remaining lemon zest and juice, remaining 1 tbsp olive oil, capers, and black pepper. Bake until fish is cooked through and flakes when pressed with a fork, 15–20 minutes. Top fish with almonds and serve with beans and quinoa.

#### NUTRITIONAL INFO

(1/4 lb trout; 1 cup quinoa and beans) 29 calories per serving, 21 g fat (3 g saturated), 49 g carbs, 12 g fiber, 38 g protein, 525 mg sodium

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continued from page 39

fact, it's been linked to a smaller hippocampus—the area of the brain involved in memory and regulating emotions."

Among the top ways diet can help your noodle is by warding off two of its mortal enemies: chronic inflammation (when your immune system is amped up and always on the attack) and vascular disease (a condition in which blood vessels become damaged and can interrupt or limit blood supply, including to the brain). Both of these conditions can lead to depression, dementia, and stroke. Short-term inflammation is a good thing—immune cells in the brain called microglia fire off substances that zap infection and in other ways protect the brain. But with chronic inflammation, microglia go awry and release inflammatory compounds, even when there is no infection. Over time, these substances destroy healthy tissue, such as brain tissue, instead of protecting it.

Fortunately for us, one of the world's most delicious diets—the Mediterranean-style of eating—has the best research creds when it comes to brain health (see "Mediterranean Diet Basics"). Eating this way makes it 40 percent less likely you'll develop Alzheimer's and other types of dementia; the diet also cuts your risk of depression and stroke by about a third, according to a 2013 review in the journal *Annals of Neurology*. "The traditional

Mediterranean diet is rich in powerful antioxidants like vitamin C in oranges and tomatoes, carotenoids in spinach and rock melon, vitamin E in olive oil and almonds, and anti-inflammatory compounds like omega-3 fatty acids in fish," says Catherine Féart, PhD, researcher in epidemiology and nutrition at INSERM (the French national institute of health and medical research) and at the University of Bordeaux, France. "These nutrients protect the arteries leading to the brain, as well as the brain itself. The earlier you adopt this way of eating, the better—although it can benefit you even if you start it in old age."

Féart's research found that this diet appears to preserve white matter, which makes up half of your brain. White matter includes protective sheaths around brain cells and is involved in learning and behaviour. For nine years, she tracked a group of Bordeaux residents who began the study around age 65. Those with the most-Mediterranean eating pattern not only had more white matter intact, they had the brain power of someone ten years their junior.

Bottom line: what's on your plate directly correlates to how you feel, think, and age. To help you stay sharp and happy, we've loaded up recipes with multiple nutrients that are critical to healthy brain function. It's a flavourful, smart way to feed your hungry brain.



## Spinach salad with crab and yogurt ranch dressing

Deficiencies in magnesium (found in cashews), folate (spinach), and zinc (crab) have all been linked to depression. Get a healthy dose of these mood-supporting nutrients to feel, and think, your best.

**SERVES 4**

- 1/4 cup 2 percent Greek yogurt**
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise**
- 1/4 cup chopped chives**
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper**
- 1/4 tsp garlic salt**
- 200 grams (about 5 cups) baby spinach**
- 200 grams cooked crabmeat**
- 8 stalks celery, diced**
- 1 apple, diced**
- 1/4 cup dried cherries or blueberries**
- 2 tbsp cashew pieces**

To make ranch dressing: In a bowl, whisk together yogurt, mayonnaise, chives, 2 tbsp water, black pepper, and garlic salt. Arrange the spinach, crabmeat, celery, apple, cherries, and cashews on a platter. Drizzle with dressing and serve.

### NUTRITIONAL INFO

256 calories per serving, 13 g fat (2 g saturated), 19 g carbs, 5 g fibre, 14 g protein, 491 mg sodium



SPINACH SALAD WITH CRAB  
AND YOGURT RANCH DRESSING



## Raspberry-turmeric crumble

Raspberries are among the fruits that pack the highest fibre content. When paired with an oat topping, each serving of this fruity dessert supplies 6 grams of gut-friendly fibre. Plus, antioxidant-rich turmeric adds a hint of tangy flavour and may boost brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that supports neuronal growth.

### SERVES 4

- 1 tin (400g) of raspberries
- 1 apple, diced
- 1/4 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats
- 3 tbsp chilled butter (grass-fed preferred), diced
- 1/3 cup light-brown sugar
- 2 tbsp hemp seeds
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon

Heat oven to 180°. In a bowl, mix berries, apple, turmeric, and black pepper until combined. Transfer to an 8- by 8-inch baking dish.

In a bowl, mash oats, butter, sugar, hemp seeds, and cinnamon with a fork (or your hand) until soft, pea-sized crumbs form.

Scatter oat mixture over berries and bake until the topping is golden brown and the fruit is bubbly, 25–30 minutes.

Cool 5 minutes before serving.

### NUTRITIONAL INFO

267 calories per serving, 11 g fat (6 g saturated), 39 g carbs, 6 g fiber, 4 g protein, 93 mg sodium

# Oneworld goes to Europe Portugal & France



Since 2009, Oneworld Retreats has hosted retreats in Europe. These retreats offer new experiences and have been a huge success. When the founders Claude Chouinard and Iyan Yaspriyana first visited **Portugal**, they immediately fell in love with the people, the beautiful nature, pristine beaches, and the food and wine scene. It was clear that Portugal would be an ideal destination for a retreat one day.

That time has arrived. **A Life of Balance retreat will take place this coming September** at a perfect retreat centre on a charming farm in the Alentejo region—only two hours south of Lisbon, with long stretches of untouched coastline, charming white-washed and dark blue villages and walking trails with breath-taking vistas at every turn. Imagine jumping in the crystal-clear freshwater lake at dawn, before or after yoga or maybe even practising yoga on a paddleboard. Escape on a bicycle and enjoy discovering famous caves or ride a horse on infinite beaches, kayak in the bay, maybe even try surfing...the possibilities are many!

You can expect **authentic Portuguese experiences** from fresh local food from the farm's garden and renowned local wines and cheeses to relaxing massages or Bodhyphosis treatments. And Claude Chouinard will share his time-tested, personal method of how to **reach your dreams**, and Balinese yoga



teacher Wayan Partawan and Bordeaux's leading teacher and wine master, Martine Bounet will lead yoga and meditation classes and workshops. After Portugal, the Oneworld Retreats journey continues to **Bordeaux, France—one of the world's best-known wine regions** where A Life of Balance retreat will take place in a privileged environment of an **8th-century château**. The team will be joined by Iyan who with Martine will lead yoga and meditation classes.

While the program is an opportunity to relax and to get in touch with the deeper self, it is also an occasion to discover the beautiful region of the Gironde and its vineyards at a time when grapes are being harvested. It goes without saying that you will also experience the culinary art of the French and, of course, some of Bordeaux's famous wines. Oneworld Retreats abroad are a lot of fun, a time-out from the busy everyday life. No need to worry about a thing, your peace of mind is what counts!

## A Life of Balance

Portugal : 14 to 21 September, 2019

Bordeaux, France : 30 September to 7 October, 2019

[oneworldretreats.com/oneworld-goes-to-europe/](http://oneworldretreats.com/oneworld-goes-to-europe/)





# TOP 5 PLACES

TO DO A BODY CLEANSE IN ASIA

Want to cleanse your body of toxins? Or perhaps you need your colon flushed out. Or maybe you need an overall spiritual cleanse. Check out these top 5 places to do a body cleanse in Asia.

**CLEANSES HAVE BECOME** extremely popular in recent years. So much so that there are actually retreats that focus on just this, cleansing the body. These can be anything from a juice cleanse to a spiritual cleanse to rid yourself of negative energies. Pick your poison and there is probably a cleanse out there just waiting for you in Asia. If you feel that you need some sort of a detox, regardless of what it may be, head to one of these Asian detox centres.



SAMAHITA RETREAT

## 1 SAMAHITA RETREAT; KOH SAMUI THAILAND

If you feel like your brain needs an upgrade, then Samahita Retreat is the place for you. Your brain is responsible for everything in your life, be it thinking, feeling, loving or learning. So cleansing, or upgrading it could increase its health. Cerebral blood flow indicates how well your brain is performing, so your health could come down to how well your brain functions. This is where the brain upgrade program can help. It's designed to help you care for the state of your brain and how it works. This is done through ancient practices like meditation and yoga, combined with biohacks, which is making small life changes to better yourself. The program includes a daily brain upgrade session, yoga classes, craniosacral therapy and meditation techniques, amongst other things. Stay for 3, 5, 7 or 10 days and leave with an upgraded brain.

## 2 KAMALAYA; KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

Kamalaya founder John Stewart spent 17 years in an Ashram in northern India, which is where he met his future wife Karina, a Princeton anthropology major with a Master's Degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine. On their travels John discovered an ancient abandoned Buddhist monk's meditation cave on vacant land on Koh Samui, so they bought it and built the healing retreat around the cave, enshrining their beliefs and life experience in the resort's DNA. Kamalaya, meaning Lotus Realm in Sanskrit, was born. It's a luxurious (and very expensive) resort and winner of a raft of prestigious awards. All manner of healing treatments are offered, from detox to weight loss to spiritual. Yoga and massage are obviously staples, but the picture-perfect resort offers considerably more.

## 3 THE FARM; LIPA CITY, BATANGAS PHILIPPINES

Our immune system is very important, as it's what protects our body against foreign invaders. If your immune system breaks down, then this can potentially be fatal. This is why The Farm created the Immune Modulation program. They use various treatments to do this, including hyperbaric therapy, sleep therapy and ozone therapy. Programs last either 13 or 21 nights, and include yoga, meditation, health talks and more! There are various suites and villas to choose from, from huts designed to look like traditional Philippine rice barns to luxurious villas complete with a private pool, kitchen and covered terrace. It's the best place in Asia to give your immune system a boost.



## 4 HARITHA AYURVEDA ACADEMY; RISHIKESH, INDIA

Balance your body, mind and soul by participating in Panchakarma. Panchakarma cleanses use five therapies to completely purify your body and rid it of any toxins that may be inside of you. It is done through spreading medicinal oils on your body, taking natural medicine to clean your bowels and rectum, and using herbal nose drops. It also includes things like holding oil in your mouth for 30 minutes, getting oil continuously poured between your brows for 1 hour, and pouring warm oil all over your entire body. India is the place to head to for Panchakarma, as this is where it comes from. And Haritha Ayurveda Academy is one of the best places of the bunch. Each cleanse is designed specifically for you and can last anywhere from 14 to 60 days. When you leave, so will all of the toxins in your body.

## THE SANCTUARY THAILAND; KOH PHANGAN, THAILAND

Have you ever felt like you needed to clean out your colon? Well you can now do this at The Sanctuary Thailand. Colon cleansing does exactly what you think it does; it cleans your colon. And it's not only for people that are clogged up. Anyone can do a colon cleanse if they want to cleanse their body and make it feel better. Plus, it rids the body of toxins and anything that may be sticking to the wall of your bowels. You're supposed to fast while you do this, as it allows your colon to rest. You will also self-administer colonic treatments that basically consists of a coffee/water mixture that's inserted via a small tube that you put into your anus. Sounds disgusting, but it's very satisfying. Taking around 30 minutes to complete, it's definitely an experience that you'll never forget.

5

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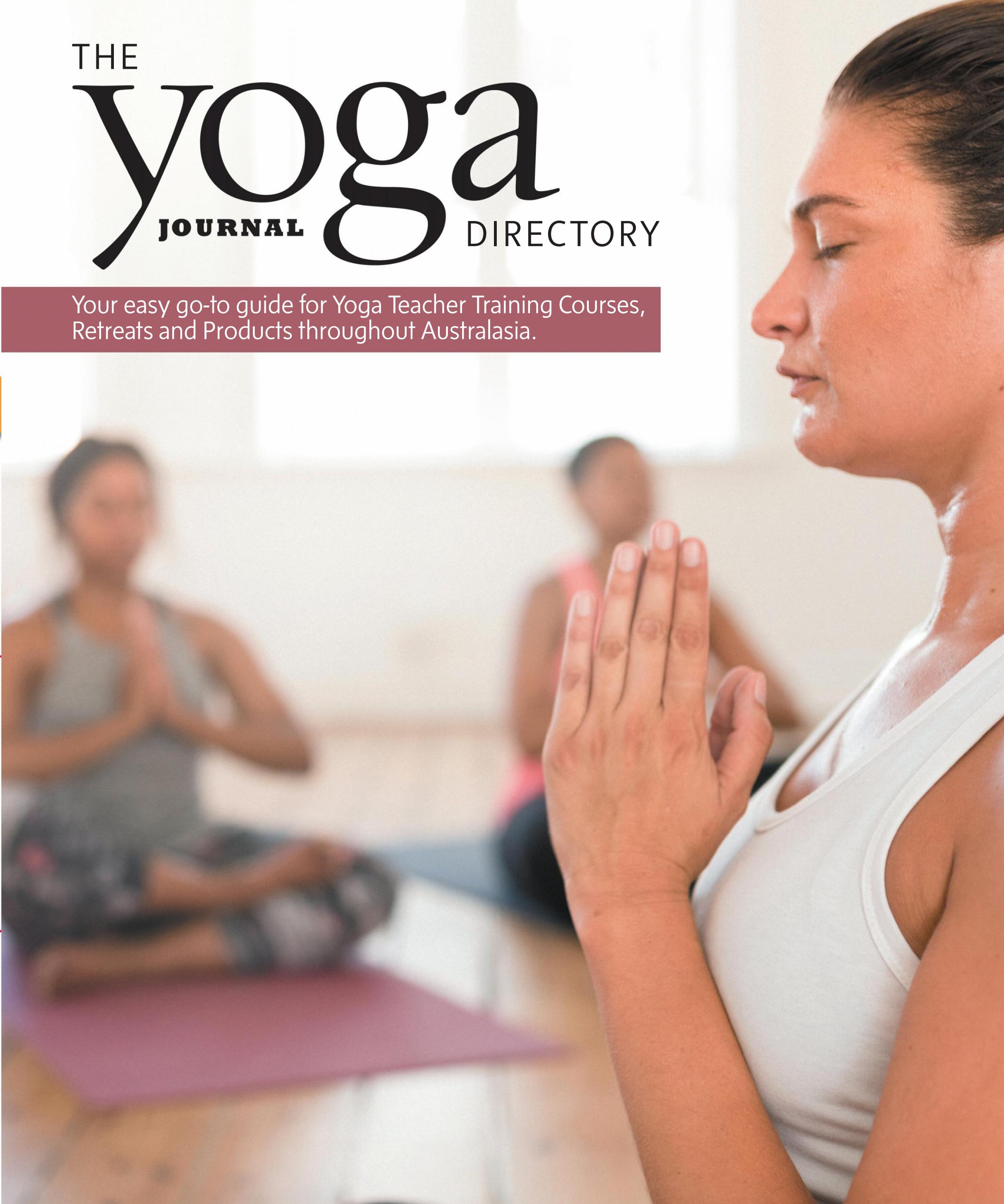
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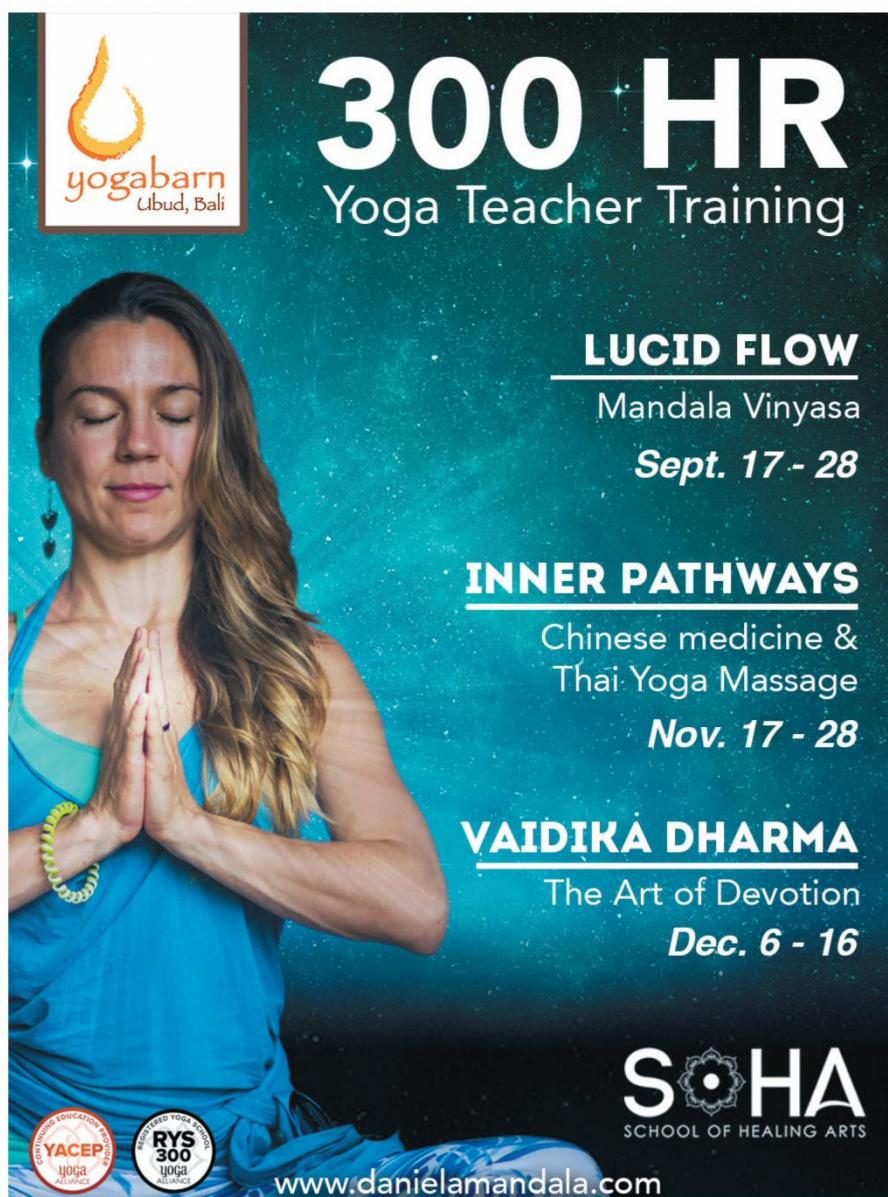
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Instead, she knew that those connections were always, already present. She had integrated her longing for intimacy, so instead of feeling driven to play it out in a passionate relationship, she recognized that intimacy is always available to someone who is truly intimate with her own heart.

Listening to her, and remembering conversations we'd had over the years, I realized that she was modelling the stages of real transformation. She had been willing to inhabit uncertainty, to remain on the threshold where she didn't know what the outcome of her journey would be. She had practiced asking for help, dipping again and again into pure being and bringing her insights into her encounters with others. And at some point, the mysterious energy of being had created a shift, a change in her source code that then altered her perceptions and sense of self. Deep change had taken place, within and without her.

And here's the point: When we pass through the gates of a transformative journey—and yoga is, in its essence, a vortex for transformation—we can never predict how it will go. What we can assume is that it will involve a dance between insight and application, between practice and grace, between being and becoming.

After we've been through a few transformative cycles, we become able to navigate the process. We can recognize periods of insight and awakening and enjoy the honeymoon stage. We remember that our falls are not signs of failure, but invitations to recognize where work is necessary. We begin to welcome opportunities to integrate our highest, deepest levels of awareness with the untransformed parts of ourselves. And we celebrate the journey, even when it seems difficult.

## THE 7 STEPS OF RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

- 1 WAKE-UP CALL** You realize that something needs to change.
- 2 HOLDING UNCERTAINTY** You search for methods to help you change, exploring avenues of growth, all while staying willing to live with the insecurity of an impending identity shift.
- 3 ASKING FOR HELP** You approach teachers and mentors, and you strongly appeal to the power of grace itself.
- 4 GRACE, INSIGHT, AND AWAKENING** Grace opens the situation, creating a breakthrough—an internal shift that may manifest as new insights.
- 5 HONEYMOON** Enjoying your new lease on life, you relish the breakthrough. It may feel like being in love.
- 6 FALL FROM GRACE** You lose touch with your new gifts, experience the consequences of over-confidence: a sense of dryness or loss of contact with your Source.
- 7 INTEGRATION** You bring insight to bear on the contractions that caused you to lose contact with grace, apply spiritual insights to the nitty-gritty actions of life, and experience the ripening of your breakthroughs over time.

**Sally Kempton** is an internationally recognised meditation teacher and author of *Meditation for the Love of It and Awakening Shakti*. Find her at [sallykempton.com](http://sallykempton.com).

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# VEGAN Comfort Food

Ashtanga Yoga teacher Kino MacGregor, founder of Omstars, loves to share a plate of edamame cakes that are based on the energetics and thermodynamics of food in Chinese medicine.

## Hemp-Crusted Edamame Cakes

SERVES 3 AS AN APPETISER OR 1 AS A MEAL

- 1 cup shelled edamame (also called mukimame)**
- ½ cup fennel, shaved**
- 3 tbsp plus 1 tsp lemon juice, divided**
- 1 tsp garlic (about ½ clove), roughly chopped**
- ¼ tsp salt plus a pinch (about ½ tsp), divided**
- 1 tsp black pepper**
- ¼ cup plus 1 tbsp plus 1 tsp olive oil, divided**
- ¼ cup tahini**
- ½ cup green apple, julienned**
- 1 tbsp lotus root, shaved (optional)**
- 1 cup hemp seeds, shelled**
- 1 tbsp plus 1 tsp all-purpose flour**
- 1 tbsp plus 1 tsp flaxseed meal**
- 2 sprigs fresh dill for garnish**
- ¼ tsp black sesame seeds for garnish**

- 1 Cook edamame according to package instructions. Soak fennel in a mixture of 2 tsp lemon juice and 2 tsp water and let sit at least 5 minutes. Process edamame, garlic, ¼ tsp salt, black pepper, 2 tsp olive oil, and 1 tsp lemon juice in a food processor (Soul Tavern uses a Robot Coupe) until finely chopped. (It will resemble the consistency of coarse breadcrumbs.) Form edamame mixture into three cylinder-shaped cakes.
- 2 In a food processor or blender, blend tahini, remaining pinch of salt, and 2 tbsp lemon juice until smooth. (You can add water if you prefer a thinner consistency.) Spoon tahini dipping sauce onto the middle of a plate. Drain fennel from lemon water and pat dry with a towel. Add fennel, green apple, lotus root (optional) to plate. Top salad with remaining 1 tsp lemon juice and 2 tsp olive oil.
- 3 Combine hemp seeds, flour, and flaxseed meal in a bowl. Coat edamame cakes in the mixture. Warm remaining ¼ cup olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add edamame cakes and cook until golden brown, flipping once, about 3–4 minutes per side. Add edamame cakes to plate and garnish with dill and sesame seeds.

### NUTRITIONAL INFO

554 calories per serving, 46 g fat (6 g saturated), 23 g carbs, 7 g fibre, 16 g protein, 272 mg sodium

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