

How to Set up a Home Practice Nancy Footner



FINDING TIME

Taking a yoga class is a big commitment. Everyone generally feels better after class, so why wouldn't we want to practice during the week between classes so that we can experience some of the same benefits?

Obviously finding the time is the biggest challenge. Begin by setting a very modest goal, say three fifteen minute sessions, Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, when you first wake up or immediately after coming home from work in the evening. Fifteen minutes will go by very quickly but you can still accomplish a lot. Pick three poses, and give yourself a few moments to lie in savasana at the end. The most important thing at the beginning is to commit to the schedule so that you can

The regular, persevering, and alert practice of yoga is the foundation for stabilizing the consciousness.
B.K.S. Iyengar



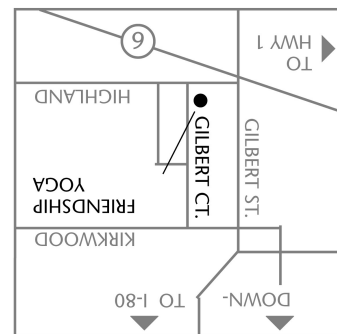
begin to feel the positive effects of a regular practice. Inevitably you will have to skip a day, and hopefully, as funny as this may sound, you will not feel quite so "good" that day, confirming the fact that your practice has really begun to make a difference in the quality of your life!

SET UP A HOME STUDIO

Find a corner of your house where you can practice and keep that corner clear, clean and available, so that you don't have to rearrange furniture every time you want to practice. It does not have to be any bigger than a yoga mat. Having a wall is an invaluable prop, but if you do not have a free wall, keep in mind that a closed door provides good "wall" space, too. Make sure the room that you will be practicing in has a door that can be closed so that you can practice undisturbed by phones, family, and pets.

INVEST IN SOME PROPS

For less than the cost of a good pair of running shoes, you can purchase the basic props: a yoga mat, block, belt, blankets and perhaps a bolster. I also recommend Mira Mehta's book "How to Practice Yoga". This book is extremely well designed and has practice sequences from which you can work. All of these supplies (except for blankets) can be purchased from Friendship Yoga, and your purchases help to support the replenishment of props for class use.



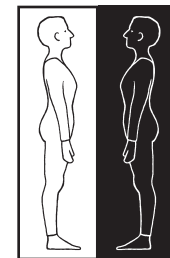
1231 Gilbert Court, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

FRIENDSHIP
Yoga



From The Director

Friendship Yoga is 11 years old



I started teaching yoga when the teacher of a class I was taking had to leave in middle of the course and I was asked to take her place. No one could have been more surprised than I to find myself in charge of a class, but I took on the challenge because I knew how important

Yoga had been to me when I had studied regularly prior to moving to Iowa City, and I felt that Iowa City was the good place to begin to start building an Iyengar Yoga community.

For our first five years we practiced at the Iowa City Zen Center, which was extremely generous in allowing me to hold classes in their space. Then as we began to outgrow the Zen Center we moved to our current location on Gilbert Court. My first class at the Zen Center was organized by a student who offered to recruit five or six or her friends if I would teach them. Since then Friendship Yoga has grown to 150 students.

I have decided to produce a newsletter, hopefully on a quarterly basis, as another avenue to share what I am learning with my students and anyone interested in finding out about Friendship Yoga or learning about Iyengar Yoga.

"In our spiritual quest, it is required of us that we develop our body in such a way that it is no longer a hindrance, but becomes our friend."

What makes an Iyengar Yoga teacher unique?

The Iyengar School of Yoga takes pride in the excellence of its teacher training. The extensive and comprehensive training benefits both the instructor and the students. Teachers travel all over the country to study in workshops with senior certified Iyengar Yoga teachers, many of whom have studied directly with B.K.S. Iyengar and who have been practicing and teaching yoga for over twenty-five years. Many travel to India as well to study directly with the Iyengars.

The Iyengar National Association of the United States sets the very highest standards for its teachers, and has designed a rigorous system for assessing teachers for certification. Sequencing of poses, use of props, learning how to correct, adjust and modify poses for different types of bodies, anatomy, and Yoga philosophy are just some of the topics that are addressed in teacher training. What is also exciting about the Iyengar method is that teacher training is never done. There are five degrees of certification and within each degree there are many levels. It is a life-long pursuit.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Iyengar Yoga National Association, check the website www.iynaus.org. From this website, you can also link to certified Iyengar teachers all over the country. If you are traveling and discover an Iyengar teacher where you will be visiting, I would encourage you to contact the teacher and see if you can "drop in" on one of her classes. Knowing that you have been studying with a certified teacher in your home studio will make you a welcome guest in an Iyengar studio anywhere in the world!

For this issue, I have asked several of my students to contribute an essay on some aspect of their yoga experience. If reading this inspires you to reflect on your experiences as a yoga student, please consider writing down your thoughts and contributing them to our next newsletter.

Namaste,
 Nancy Footner

FRIENDSHIP
Yoga

Spring Session

Free class: May 1st, 9-10:15

May 12—July 2

Studio Closed 5131 Memorial Day

Prairiewoods Retreat

June 4—6, 2004

New Class: Teen Yoga

June 7th—July 26

For more information, Call 338-2674 or visit www.friendshipyoga.com

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So often life knocks us down with unexpected blows. Having a yoga practice allows one to be more resilient in the face of these kinds of challenges. However, if because of illness or injury you find you can not practice as your normally would (or do what the class is doing), this does not mean that you have to stop practicing altogether. Read on... NF

Healing from Injury with Yoga

Theresa Carbrey

It wasn't such a big fall. Just six feet, from a loft onto a fallen ladder. (The ladder fell out from under me as I attempted to descend, and I fell onto it, landing on my back.) The docs complimented me on having survived with no more injuries than I had, and told me to "take it easy," whatever that means.

I was sure yoga would be the key to my prompt recovery so resumed my practice, even doing a headstand to prove it was still possible. But the penetrating, clanging headaches would not release me. After a week living on Aleve, I wondered if I would in fact have to accept the prognosis of a three to six month recovery. What to do? The chiropractor advised I give up yoga entirely for a period of time so the bones could realign under his direction without the tugging of yoga poses.

At first I felt like a kid on summer holiday. No yoga! It was so hard to fit in the schedule anyway. For over a month and a half I sincerely tried to "take it easy," doing no yoga or lifting. Then I began to miss my yoga practice in a big way. It was like someone had died and I had missed the funeral. Presently the chiropractor was satisfied I was making good recovery, and soon I had approval to begin restorative yoga poses.

I realized I had slighted the restorative poses previously. Now they were all I had, they were extra special. I could rest for five to ten minutes in most, marveling at how yoga gracefully joined the body and mind and refreshed the spirit. I was dedicated to the practice of the restorative poses and grew stronger. Just this week, three and a half months after the fall, I resumed standing poses.

I'd like to say I am fully recovered, and have this story have a happy ending. But there's no hurrying healing. I am consciously grateful my injuries were not permanently disabling. I try to do my yoga practice now with a softness and gentleness that was perhaps formerly lacking. The warrior spirit can be expressed with finesse and ease as well as with driving intensity. Sometimes the clanging in my head returns after a yoga session, and I realize the sprained muscles in my neck are asking for a bit more time.

Yoga helped me recover from my congenital spinal weakness. It helped me reclaim my elbow from an old gardening injury, and from the lingering lumps of a long-ago bike wreck. Now with a slow, mellow approach and little help from Patanjali, I give myself the rest of my life to complete my recovery.



Students who have been studying at Friendship Yoga and become pregnant are encouraged to continue their yoga practice through the span of their pregnancy.

The asanas (postures) help to maintain hormonal balance and normal blood pressure, strengthen the pelvic muscles, improve blood circulation in the pelvic region, while maintaining strength in the limbs and flexibility in joint areas.

Pregnant students practice the standing poses with support. Forward bends are restrained to concave back position in order to maintain space in the abdomen, and gentle supportive backbends and twists which emphasize chest opening are practiced as well. Upavistha Konasana (legs spread wide, seated) and baddhakonasa (bound angle pose), and a modified malasana (a squat) are important postures for pregnant women to practice often. Any postures which put pressure on the abdomen (active back-

bends and abdominal strengtheners) are eliminated for the duration of the pregnancy. Of course pregnant women need to practice the supine resting poses such as supta virasana, and supta baddhakonasana to calm the nervous system and focus inwardly on their breathing.

Inverted postures are particularly beneficial as going upside down relieves the heaviness in the pelvis, fatigue and swelling in the legs, as well as low back pain. Students who continue to practice during their pregnancy experience many emotional benefits as well. The practice provides structure and solace during a time where rapid changes are taking place and stress is high as one tries to manage ongoing responsibilities. Staying connected to the Friendship Yoga community, as Jen mentions in her essay guarantees encouragement and support. We all look forward to our newest "yoga baby". NF

Experiencing Yoga Through Pregnancy

Jen Dutton

shred my self-esteem the way my first one had. Pregnancy was also relatively comfortable, free of morning sickness and less fearful. The first few weeks of recovery and new motherhood have been less complicated and I am more myself at this part of the of the journey than I had been two years earlier when I had more distance from the confusing postpartum weeks.

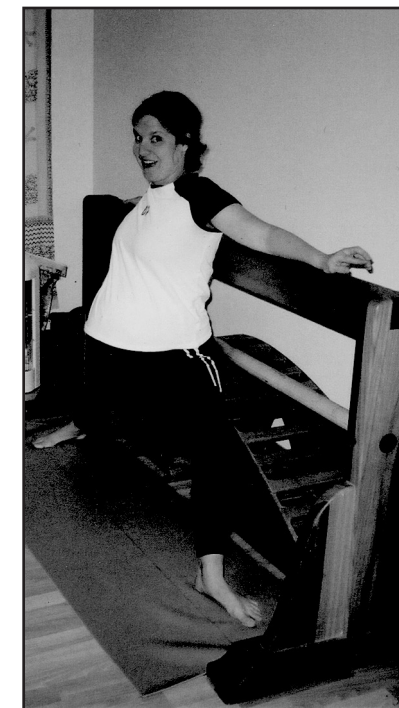
Two years ago this spring, I was almost a year into new motherhood and still feeling some residual blues. A friend suggested taking a Yoga class, so after a little research, I found Friendship Yoga and enrolled in a beginner's section. I wasn't sure what I wanted out of the experience—something new, a break from my home life, or maybe, vainly, just a way to exercise and lose weight.

After a year of classes, the Yoga began to make me feel light and full of energy. I practiced at home. I read a couple of books about the Iyengar method of Yoga and went on a three-day retreat. The day my daughter turned two, I decided to throw caution to the wind and give pregnancy another chance. Given my first experience, I was mighty apprehensive about the decision.

Cass, my son, was born nine months later. Like his sister, he was big—more than nine pounds at birth. He came into the world, however, after a labor that didn't seem to stretch into eternity or

Experience accounts for some of the difference, but I also credit Yoga. The weekly classes at Friendship Yoga helped me increase my physical strength, focus, and mental flexibility. I also gained confidence—a lot of things that I thought were impossible have become possible, like headstands and backbends. Finally, in my instructor and the other students I had a cheering section, people who were thinking of me, even as the atmosphere of the studio we practiced in remained relatively silent.

I am a few weeks into my new life. Cass is kicking up a fuss. My daughter has a book she wants me to read. I'm feeling a little housebound and the dog is howling for a walk. All of the same



challenges remain, as well as the same anxieties. I just have a new way of coping and relating to them, and turmoil doesn't feel like turmoil anymore, it feels like joy.

I am often asked "Why aren't there more men in yoga classes?" I asked one of my students once and his response was, "There's no ball, and nobody's keeping score."

O.K., I can't argue with that. What follows is an account from a guy for whom yoga has really made a difference. NF

A Single Stretch

Steve Bender

My vocation, as a dentist, is a rather sedentary one and I've always felt the need to pursue some sort of exercise to offset the effects of sitting all day. I played tennis, golf, racquetball and for the past 30 years have been an avid runner. In spite of my efforts, the effects of repetitive bending and twisting, while peering into an open mouth, finally caught up with me. Four years ago, I began to notice some tingling in my left hand, which soon turned to numbness up to my elbow and then unbearable neck pain. This, of course, severely affected my ability to practice dentistry. The diagnosis was two herniated discs in my neck causing impingement of the nerves to my left arm. Physical therapy failed to help and the growing pain forced me to have cervical fusion of C5-6-7. Due to nerve damage during surgery, the neurosurgeon informed me that I would probably lose 40-50% of the strength in my left tricep and shoulder muscle and that it was unlikely to return.

So, I gave up my dental practice and decided to move back to my hometown of Iowa City. Being retired at age 52 was not fun and I was driving my wife crazy being around home all the time with not enough to do. After 6 months of healing and therapy I was feeling much better and really missed the clinical practice of dentistry. Fortunately, I found a part-time dental practice to purchase and began seeing patients 3 days a week in addition to teaching at the College of Dentistry. My professional life was back on track, but my physical health still needed a boost.

I had been able to resume running again, but my upper body strength had deteriorated from months of inactivity. Because of the lost strength in my left arm and shoulder, lifting weights was rather awkward and frustrating. About this time, my wife had started to take yoga classes at Friendship Yoga. She would show me what she was learning and then began to encourage me to give it a try. I signed up for a free class and that was all it took. After that first workout, I had the same warm "glow" I'd experienced from lifting weights, and I felt great. Now, 2½ years later, I'm enjoying the rewards of my improved flexibility, strength and balance. I still have a lot of work to do, but my shoulders and arms are much stronger and my core fitness is better than it's ever been. I can see the benefits of increased leg strength in my daily running and I think I've even shaved a stroke or two off my golf game because of my increased flexibility. My wife and I practice together 3-4 times a week in addition to our regular class and although you really do yoga by yourself, there's something special about practicing with your loved one. I've made a commitment to yoga practice and I intend to keep it, because my road to greater health and happiness began with just a single stretch.

