

yoga

JOURNAL

How to let go of
negative habits

10 poses to keep you centred

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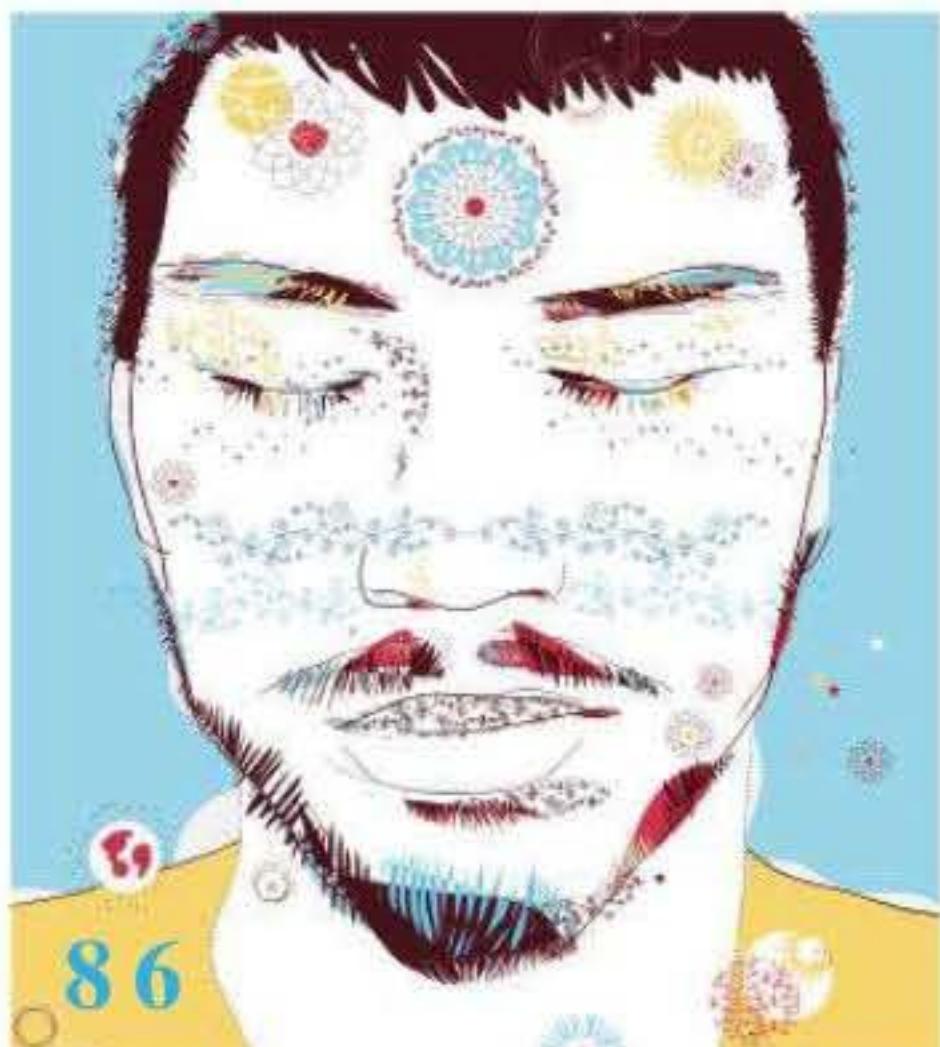
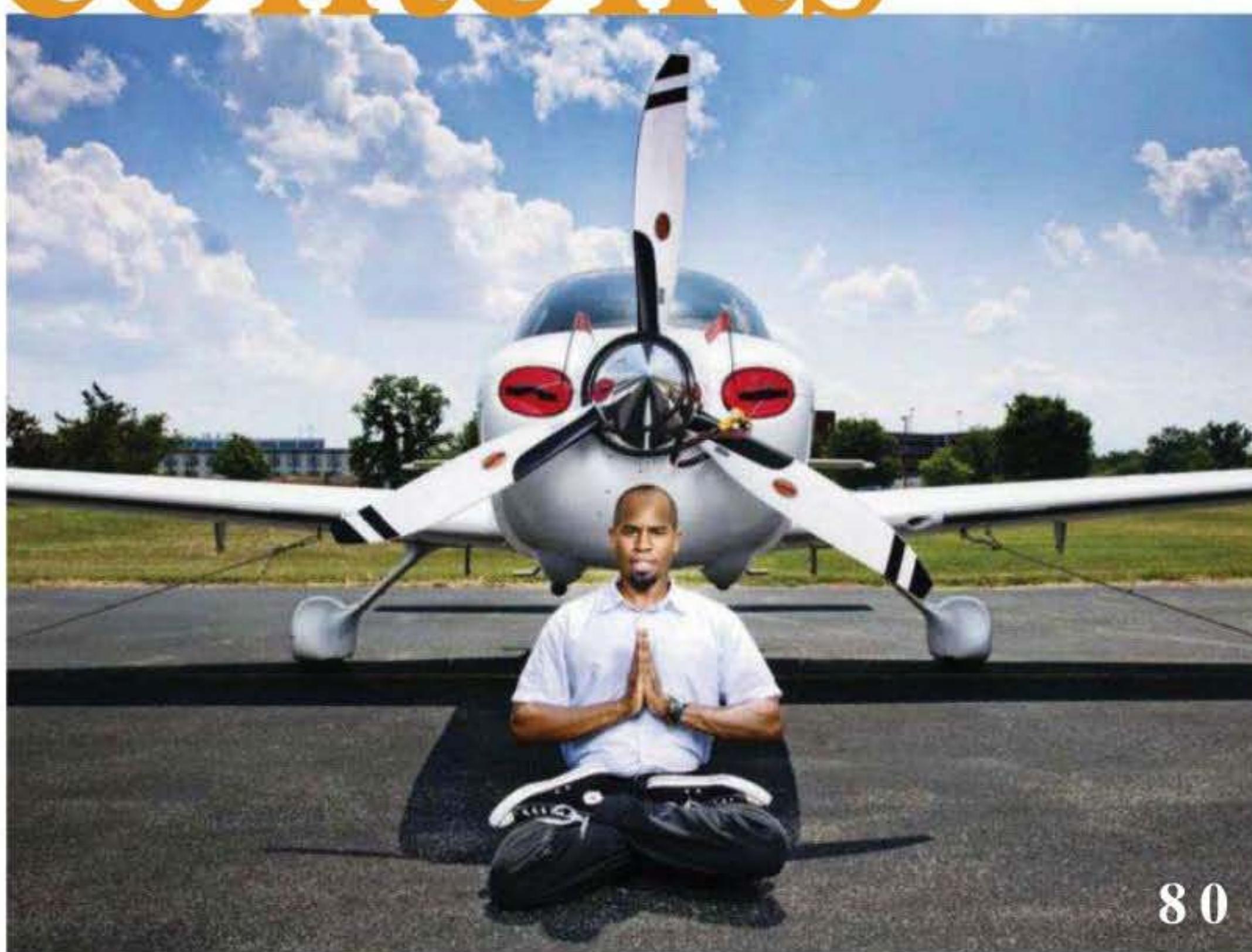
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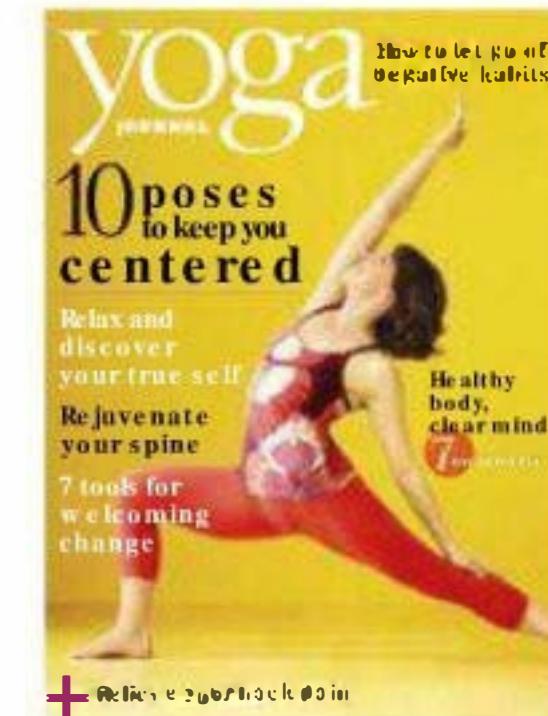
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Ada Lusardi of Berkeley, California, brings an extensive knowledge of anatomy, a background in dance, and 15 years of meditation and yoga practice into her alignment-based teaching.

cover credits

model: Ada Lusardi; top: Fila; pants: Elan; stylist: Racine Christensen. Photographed by DAVID MARTINEZ.

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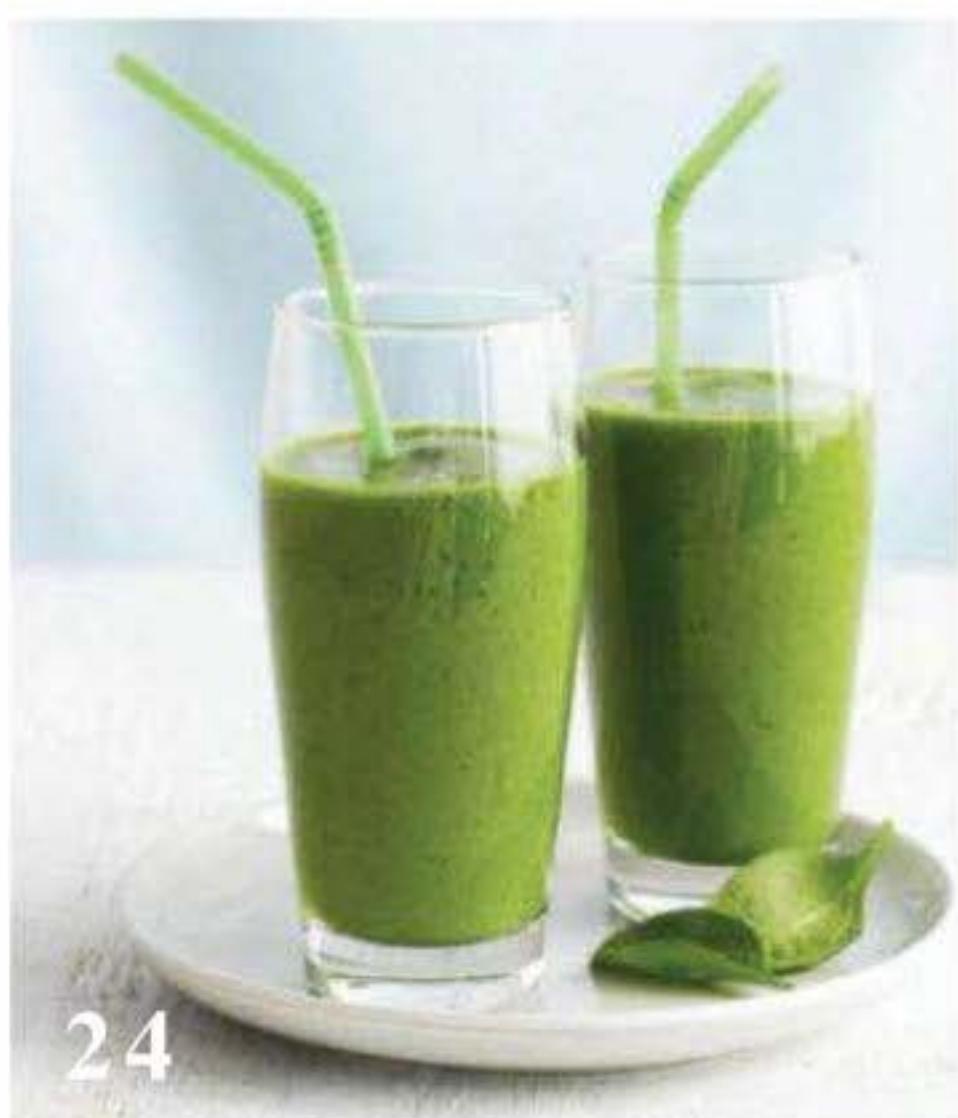
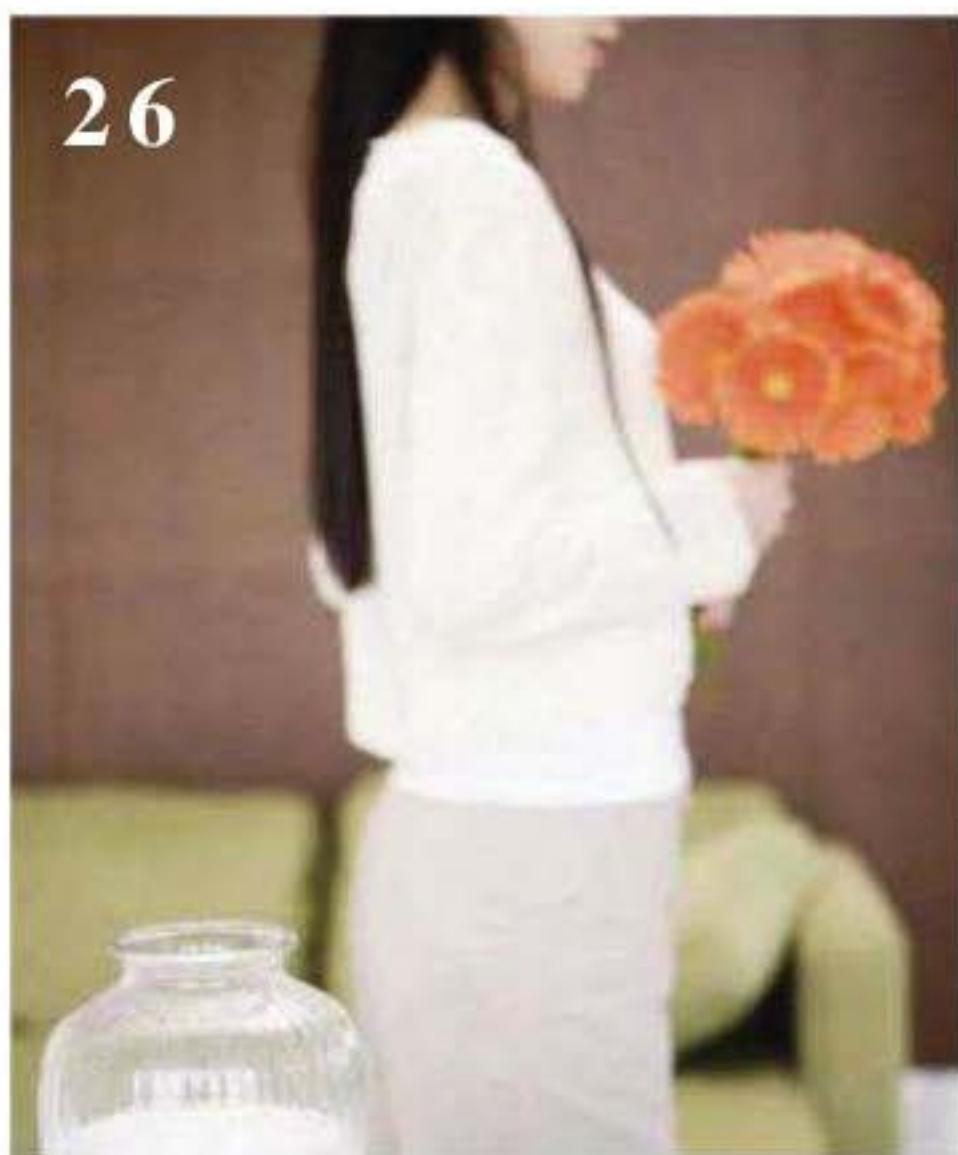
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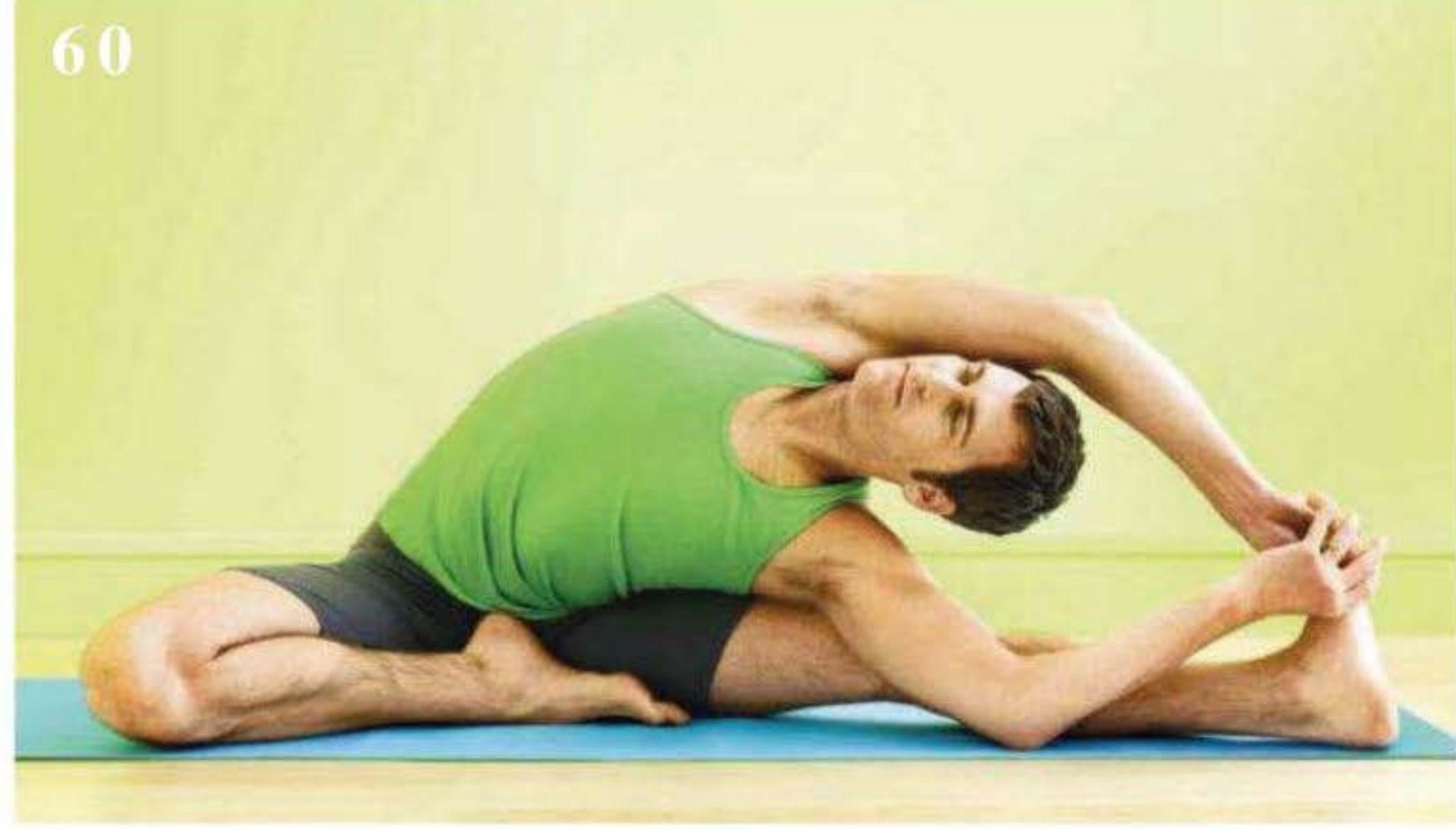
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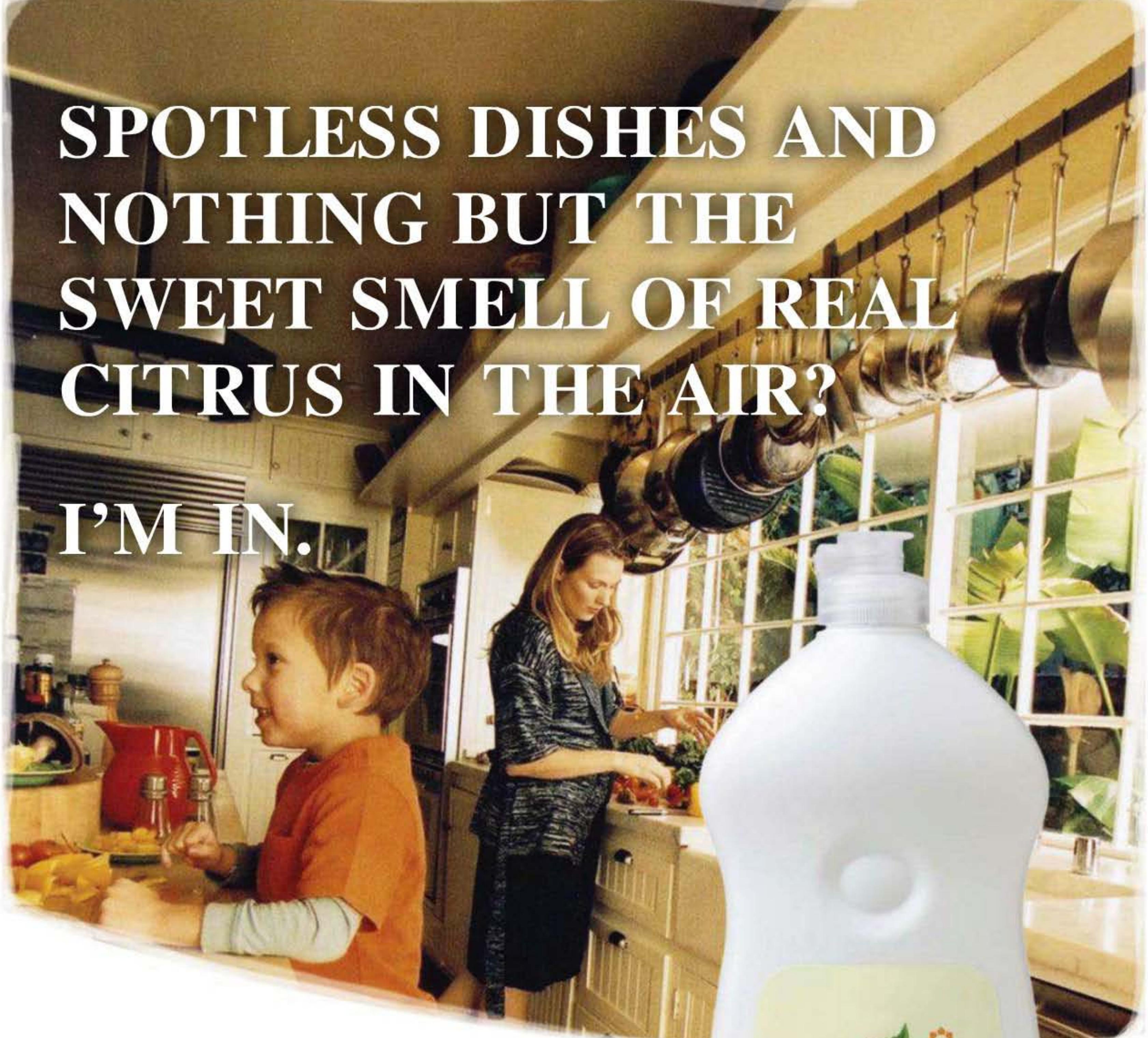
Steady as she goes Be ready for life's inevitable storms; Cultivate balance and stability.

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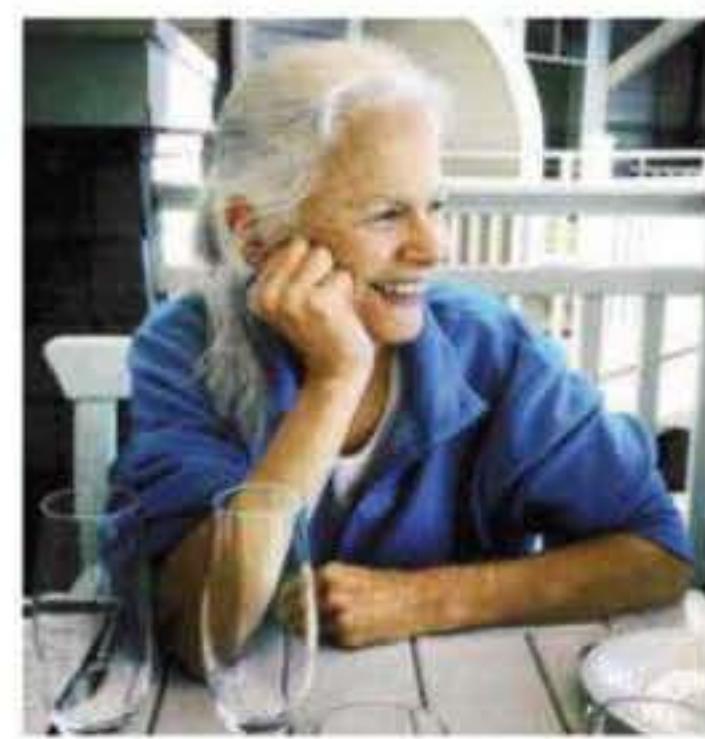
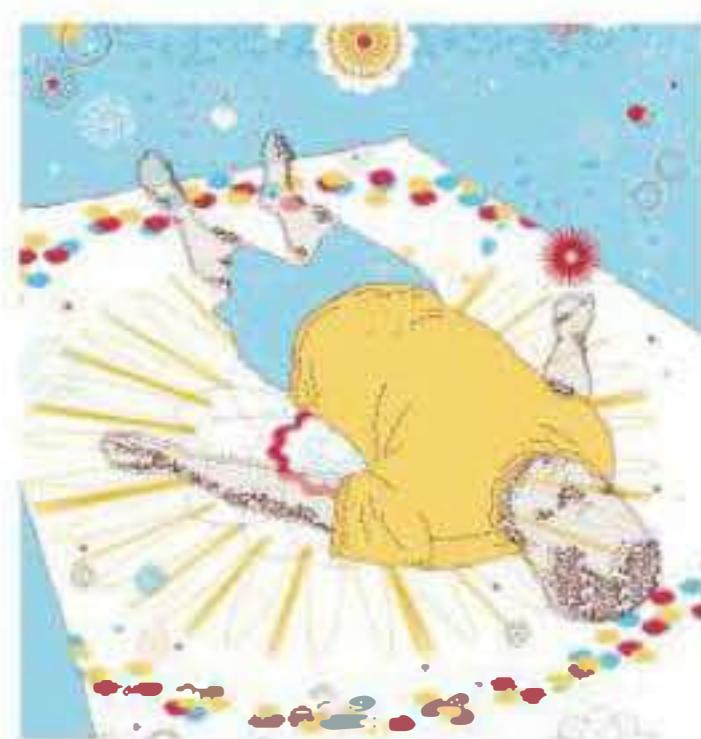
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7-DAY

fall detox

Optimize your health this fall and winter with a gentle Ayurvedic cleanse, customized to suit your needs (see “Season of Change,” page 70). Then go online for the full program, including a dosha quiz, recipes, practice videos, meditations, lifestyle tips, and much more! yogajournal.com/falldetox



LISTEN

Find yourself in a deeply relaxing SAVASANA after tuning in to this audio recording from the feature story “Heavenly Rest” (page 86). yogajournal.com/livemag

WATCH

Learn to keep your balance during chaotic times by practicing ASYMMETRICAL BACKBENDS. This video sequence, created by Shannon Schneider for Home Practice (page 67), shows you how. yogajournal.com/livemag

NEW BLOG!

Check out our latest food blog, CONSCIOUS COOK, and find seasonal recipes, kitchen wisdom, and culinary inspiration from food writer and yoga teacher Lynn Alley. yogajournal.com/blogs



Look for this symbol throughout the issue; then go to our website and watch or listen for exclusive content at yogajournal.com/livemag.

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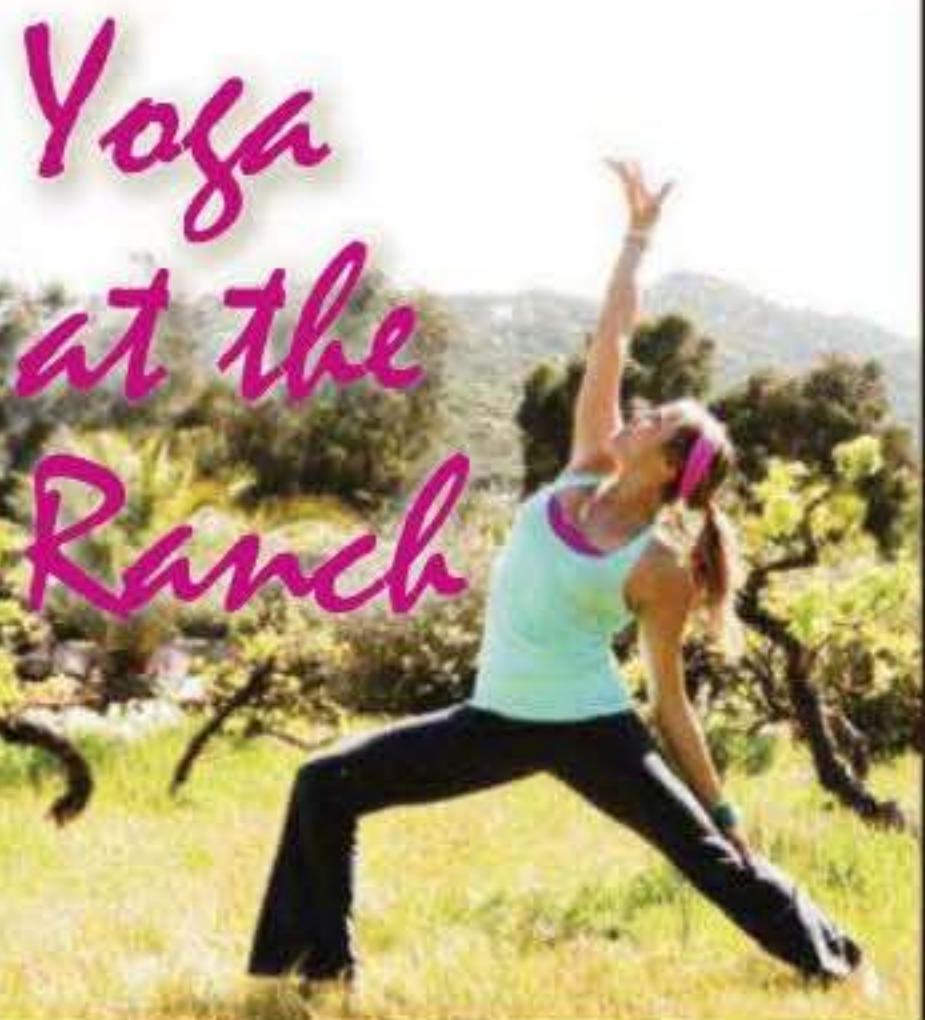
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MÉXICO
THE PLACE YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

editor's letter || Kaitlin Quistgaard

fly me to the moon

How far can you go when you see your limits in a new light?

This summer at Yoga Journal's Midwest Conference, I achieved liftoff into Eka Pada Galavasana (One-Legged Balance, also known as Flying Pigeon Pose). I'd never aspired to master that pose, but after three days of classes with skillful teachers, lengthening and strengthening virtually every muscle, my body just floated up into the arm balance. Well, actually, I worked ferociously to widen my hips and fire up my abs, and then I hovered above the ground for a nanosecond.

Finding that airborne balance, even fleetingly, was thrilling. It's the kind of breakthrough people often experience while on retreat or at a conference, when intensive hours devoted to practice catalyze undeniable transformation. My brief moment of glory had a big impact; it immediately and radically energized me and my commitment to practice—and not because I'm terribly interested in mastering a bunch of challenging asanas.

Yes, it's fun to rock a tricky pose. But my exhilaration stemmed from the recognition that—"Wow, I am more capable today than I was yesterday. I've changed. And given that I never expected that pose to be in my repertoire, maybe I'm capable of far more than I thought I was." The pose offered a visceral reminder that disciplined effort does result in change and that my beliefs, especially about myself, don't always reflect the truth.

Sometimes, fear keeps you from realizing your full potential. In "Light on the Horizon" (page 43), Sally Kempton offers several practices to diminish the grip of fears so that you can embrace new possibilities. And in "Inquire Within" (page 55), Kate Holcombe considers how shining awareness on our mental patterns enables us to look beyond our expectations and see what's true.

My unexpected Eka Pada Galavasana made me wonder whether I'm accurately assessing my limits. Where else in life am I holding back, assuming that liftoff isn't possible? Where else can I apply discipline, cultivating both strength and flexibility, so that I'm ready for the next invitation to be or do something that makes my heart sing? This is exactly why I come back again and again to my mat—not to achieve some physical feat, but to activate and invigorate my own self-discovery.



Check out the debut of our new column: **Align & Refine** (page 91). In it, Jason Crandell teaches specific actions, using props, to create greater stability and opening in a whole class of poses (in this case backbends). Tell us what you think by "liking" *Yoga Journal* on Facebook and posting your feedback!



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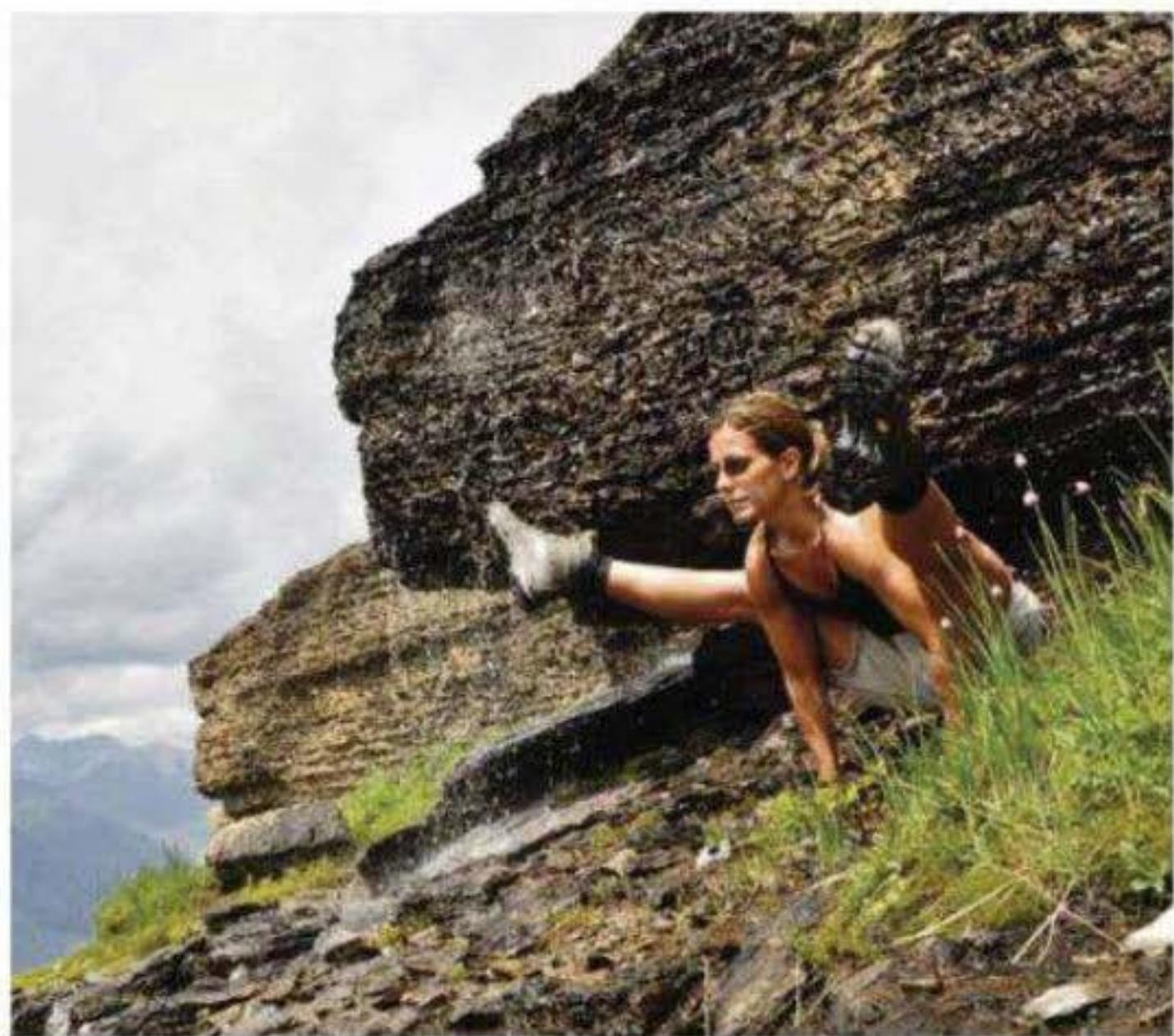
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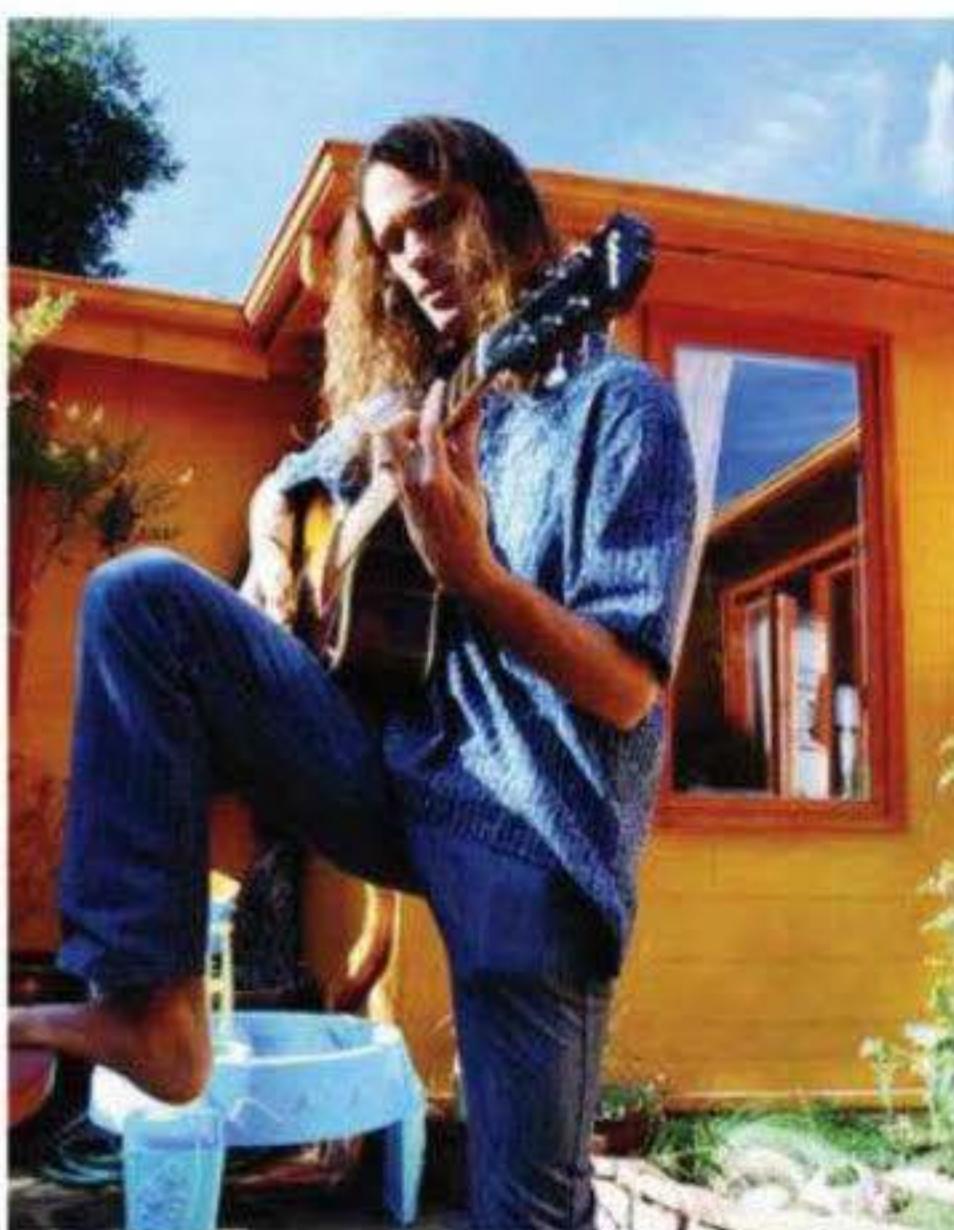


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contributors



His passion for truly affordable and sustainable health care led Shadow Yoga teacher and Ayurvedic consultant **Scott Blossom** to create the gentle detox program outlined in ‘Season of Change’ (page 70). ‘The program takes an angle on those central pillars of your life (like sleeping, eating, breathing, and scheduling your day) that don’t require lots of money to change in a way that can be profoundly healing,’ he says. When he’s not teaching people to manage their own health ‘through the lens of Ayurveda,’ Blossom hosts regular music jams at his home in Berkeley, California. (He plays the guitar and bass, his classically trained pianist wife plays the harmonium, and his twin brother has been a musician for decades.) Blossom attended his first yoga class at the age of 19, when he was experiencing depression; yoga offered him ‘the first crack of light in a long, dark time.’ He went back the next day and has now been studying yoga for more than 20 years and teaching it for 14.



Barrel-racing, horse-training country girl **Lauren Burke** was born on a sheep and cattle ranch near Tomales Bay, along Northern California’s rugged coastline. The frequent *Yoga Journal* contributor’s early years there fostered a love of natural light, which she brings to her photography. Burke, who is now based in San Francisco, began her practice as a Bikram yogini ‘way back in the day’ and found that prenatal yoga kept her grounded before her daughter (now a toddler) was born. Whenever she can find time in her busy shooting schedule, the photographer squeezes in yoga to calm her spirit and make her feel taller.

Rocket-style Ashtangayogi **Peg Mulqueen** was on her way to earning a PhD and having a career as a public-school superintendent when she took her first yoga class. Hearing her kids say she ‘was a lot nicer’ when she practiced yoga led her to drop her career path of becoming a teacher and open her own yoga studio in northern Virginia. Ten years later, Mulqueen is focusing on bringing the inspiration she’s found to the next generation of yogis. Writing ‘New Faces of Yoga’ (page 80) reminded her that ‘You don’t have to travel anywhere to find inspiration. We have it right in every community, in every home.’ When not on her mat, Mulqueen and her family can be found surfing off of Maui, suspended 500 feet above the Costa Rican jungle floor on a zipline, or

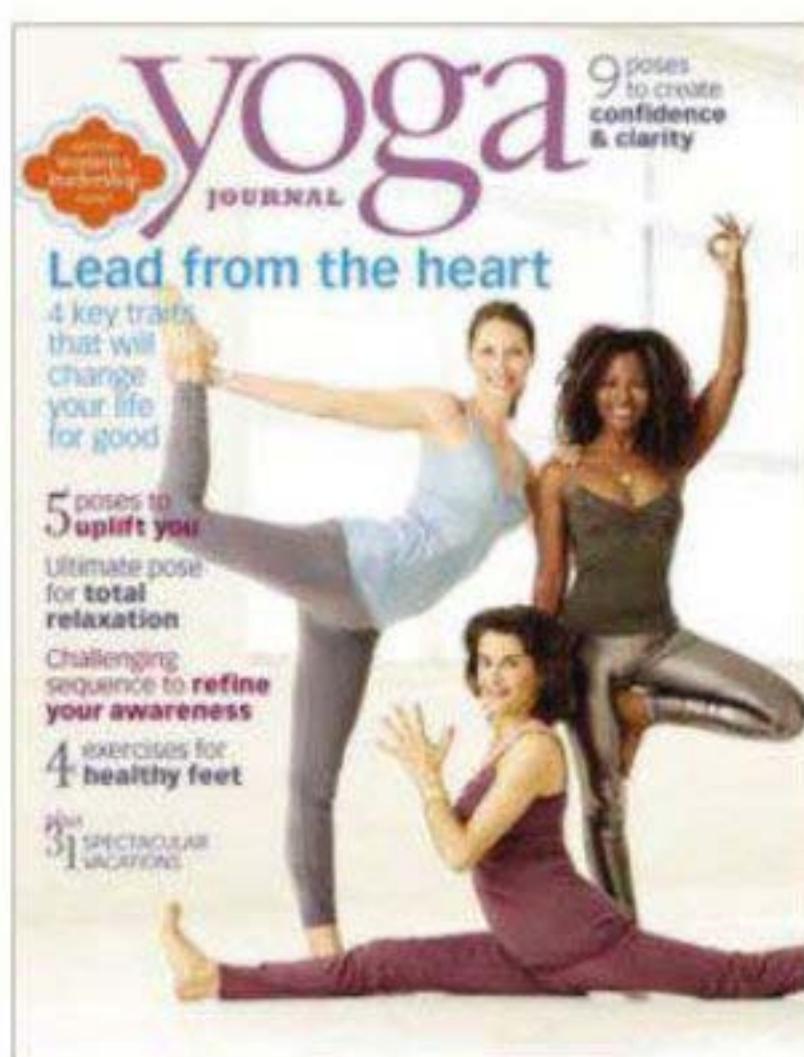
fly fishing in the wilder places of Montana, where she retreats every summer with her husband and two teenage children.



let the
sun into
your
heart

Séphanie / Rebecca


LOLË



Yes to Diversity

Thank you for putting a person of color on your June cover. As I go to classes, I often find that I am the only person of color taking part. For a time I felt uncomfortable, because I did not see a similar face. Many people either practice at home or are intimidated to walk into a class. Yoga Journal has taken the first step in identifying the diversity within the practice. Just as yoga is diverse in classes, so are the people who practice. This cover provides a small glimpse into that diversity. I only ask that you continue to explore it. Thank you.

Shaquay Clark, a.k.a. "Q" Tampa, Florida

Earth Days

I was deeply touched by William Powers's article on his journey to find peace in the midst of environmental destruction ("State of Grace," Reflection, August '11). I recently attended a full-moon Kundalini celebration during the wildfires that were destroying thousands of acres in Arizona. Nearly everyone in the group asked for healing for their human loved ones. I asked that the trees and animals be protected. The loving, openhearted energy of the group reminded me that all good things come from a place of compassion. Thank you for consistently bringing attention to our need to protect Earth in a message of peace and positive thinking.

Janet McGillivray Fountain Hills, Arizona

Mission Possible

I just finished reading "A World of Possibility" and "Global Offerings" (Om, June '11). After traveling to Haiti for the past five years with a mission team that has been delivering health care and human aid for more than 25 years, I'm sitting here stewing about the fundraising

goal of \$20,000. So much in Haiti can be done for so little! As health care provider, my expenses for room and board in our medical clinic are \$550 for

two weeks. I pay for my own airfare and supplies: a total of \$1,500-\$2,000. A humanitarian trip to Haiti doesn't cost \$20,000! Please don't let that amount hold anyone back from serving the less fortunate. A mission trip like this will change your life, open your eyes, and never leave your heart.

Theresa A. Barnic Elmira, New York

I enjoyed reading about the Off the Mat, into the World program (Om, June '11). It is good to know that there are yoga people who are also activists. If it's not a monthly feature already [profiling yoga people who are also activists], please, make it one.

Paul Rizzo Tustin, California

Let Go and Grow

As I moved to a new city this spring, I wanted to take my Yoga Journals with me, so I decided to make a collage of my past issues. A plain bulletin board was magically turned into one of my favorite pieces of décor! I was sad to leave behind the inspiring words and stories from past YJs, but we all have to let go and grow—so why not create a little piece of something new out of something old?

Riley Jean Fulkerson
Toronto, Canada



Passive Practice

Looking at the photos in "Solar Powered" (Home Practice, March '11), I wondered why the sequence was called "Yin Yoga-style." To stay passively in poses for longer periods of time with relaxed breathing and the support of props was invented decades ago by B.K.S. Iyengar and simply called "recuperative asanas." There is sufficient Sanskrit terminology to describe this kind of energy, so why use Chinese terminology? In any case, I would prefer for the original source to be mentioned rather than someone who gave new names to something that already existed.

Isabella Welsch Vienna, Austria

TEACHER'S RESPONSE That is a great question. Although both B.K.S. Iyengar's restorative yoga and Yin Yoga include passive poses that are held for several minutes, calm the nervous system, and may utilize props, that is where their similarities end. The two approaches are quite distinct in both intention and effect. Restorative yoga uses props to fully support the body in an experience of profound letting go with maximum comfort, regenerating the body and mind by offering deep, supported rest. In contrast, Yin poses are

intended to be somewhat uncomfortable. A Yin pose will safely stress the connective tissue (fascia, joints, ligaments) of a targeted region of the body by pulling on or compressing the tissue so that it lubricates. Although Yin

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Dilute and rub on temples when feeling the effects of a long day. Now relax...



Place 1-2 drops on floor of pet carrier while transporting. Rover will thank you.



Trouble on a boat? Inhale peppermint from bottle and sail on my friend.



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To freshen the bathroom, mix 6 drops per 1oz. water and spritz. Ah, fresh minty goodness.



Inhale peppermint prior to your workout routine to amp up the energy. Work it, own it...



To energize your practice, mix 6 drops per 1oz. water and spritz your yoga mat.



Add 12 drops per 1oz. skin care oil and massage aching muscles. Good as new.

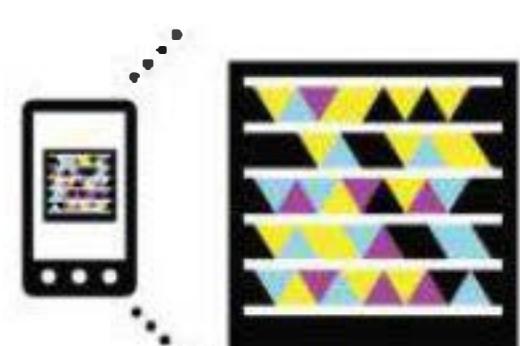
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Letters

Yoga was popularized by Paul Grilley, it evolved from an ancient style of practice referred to as Taoist Yoga. The Home Practice I offered in the March issue included both Yin and active (Yang) poses in my InnerYoga sequence, an approach that prioritizes ease, awareness, kindness, and breath within the yoga experience.

Dina Amsterdam

CORRECTIONS Due to an editing error, Richard Rosen was misidentified as a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher (Home Practice, Aug. '11). Although Rosen has studied in the Iyengar tradition for 31 years, he is not a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher.

William Powers's website ("State of Grace," August '11) was listed incorrectly. The author's website is williampowersbooks.com.

SEND FEEDBACK TO Letters, Yoga Journal, 475 Sansome Street, Suite 850, San Francisco, CA 94111; email: letters@yogajournal.com; fax: (415) 591-0733. Include your name, city, state, and phone number. Letters and emails may be edited for length and clarity.



ONLINE BUZZ When you start doing yoga, you expect to become more flexible, maybe more calm. But as YJ blogger Erica Rodefer discovered, there are a host of benefits you don't expect. Here's what our Facebook fans said when she asked:

What bonus benefits have you received from your yoga practice?

Yoga changed my thoughts about what is important in life. I realized my health is of upmost importance!

Esther Fortunato Motley

I eat healthier, feel healthier, and am more confident. I quit smoking with NO problem. Power Yoga has truly changed me, and I am hooked!

Agnes Sze helledy

I finally discovered a quick and easy way to help a melting down five-year-old ... Child's Pose! He intuitively adds an adorable up-dog when he feels calm again.

Gina Huhle O'Connor

Yoga can be shared with others who want to support a healthier, more peaceful lifestyle. The community has been a big benefit for me.

Clover Allen

My mat is now my safe place to go to at the end of a long day. When I'm through asanas, I let myself think and

feel my way through things that I'm not comfortable doing anywhere else. It's especially useful when I hear scary news from my husband while he's deployed.

Heather Jones

Yoga affected my desire to eat healthy and stick to it. It relieved IBS symptoms (a raw diet did the rest). And it remains the only physical exercise I want to do, and often.

The mis Terra

After taking just one class, I could easily reach back to get my bra strap hooked!

Jennifer Oshorn

An attitude that permeates everything I do. At the end of my practice, I'm singing (to myself, so as to not disturb my fellow yogis) James Brown's "I Feel Good!"

Penny Cameron

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↓
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TRICKLE DOWN

When you treat every act as sacred, you feel the effects in every part of your life.

Ever since our seven-year-old son was able to sit upon his own in the bathtub, my Indian husband has chanted “Svaha!” every time he pours water over his head, much to our son’s squealing delight. Because it was a part of my husband’s own bath-time ritual growing up, “svaha” has become a tradition in our household and something we practice with our 18-month-old daughter as well.

Used in both Hinduism and Buddhism, svaha (or swaha) is translated roughly as “Hail” or “So be it” and is commonly chanted as the final exclamation of a mantra. In addition, and in this instance with bath water, svaha serves as an oblation or, as my mother-in-law says, a beseeching of the gods to accept one’s offerings, for which one hopes to receive divine blessings in return.

What’s lovely about svaha is that the word itself encompasses an act of prayer, sparking a collaborative dialog with holiness. The humblest and most basic of everyday activities, like rinsing a sudsy head with water, become elevated ➤



BY MAGGIE LYON VARADHAN

trickle down

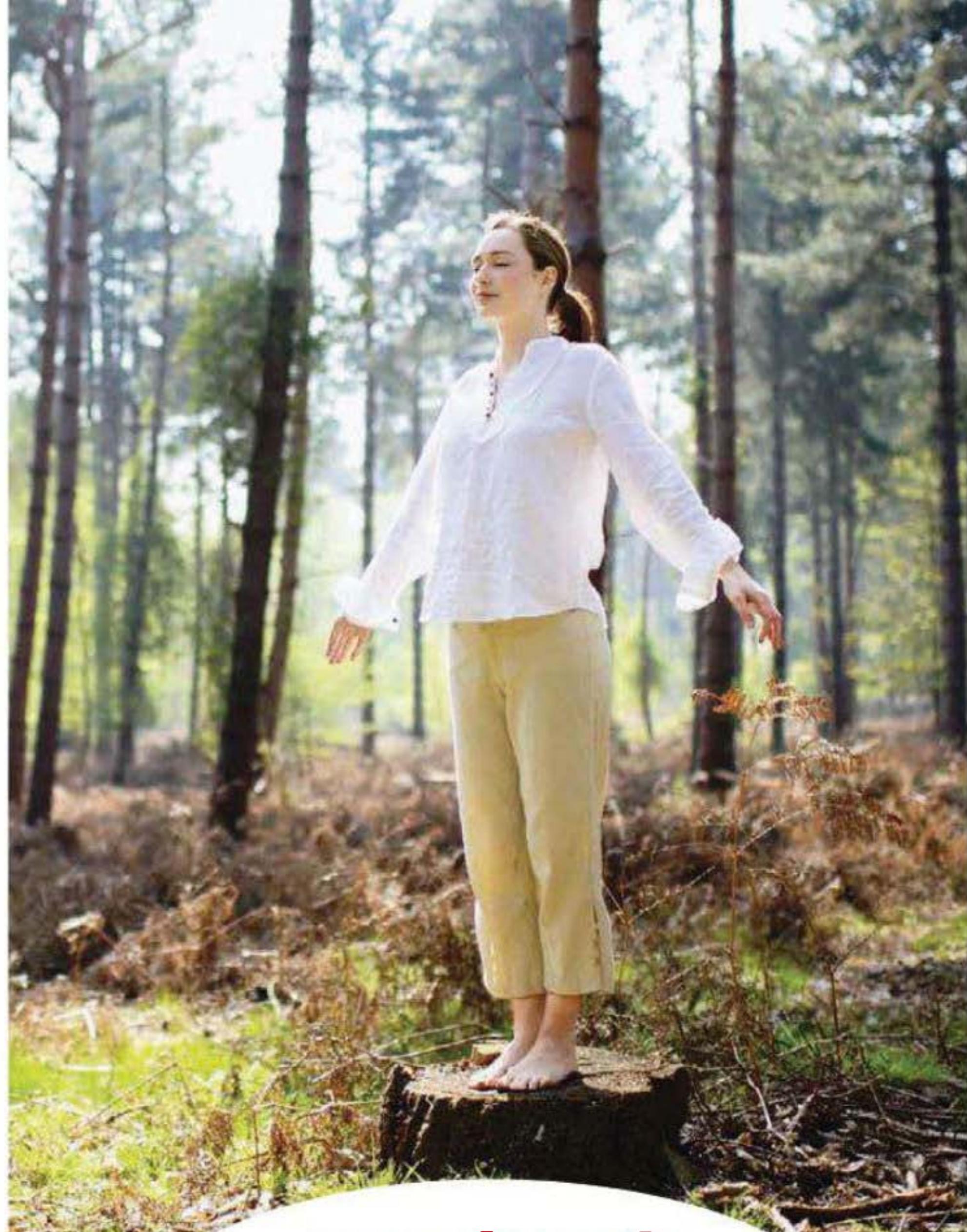
avenues to connecting with, and surrendering to, the Divine and simultaneously receiving sacred transmission.

The same is true of yoga practice. We arrive on our mats. We sit in **Vira-sana** (**Hero Pose**), breathe, unfold into **Adho Mukha Svanasana** (**Down Dog**), and breathe more. Whatever shapes we take in the midst of our daily etudes, our practice pays homage. Our bodies transform into the conduits through which we offer ourselves up and accept celestial gifts. The beseeching and bestowing arise in tandem. In yogaclass, when **svaha** is chanted, the bright devotion of the collective practice is rendered that much more powerfully.

I often introduce my students to **svaha** as an unbounded generosity of spirit, in which each act, large or small, is graciously imbued with consciousness and selflessness. There is no better place to experience this than on our yoga mats, where practice teaches us how to exist evenly in the world. Just as we can find **Savasana** in every pose and then in the center of our hectic lives, we can come to personify **svaha** in all **asana**, too.

The mat initially serves as the playground. Yet its contours begin to stretch along with our bodies, out into the world. Steadily, every act, every gesture of the hand, overflows with this complete offering, as we honor and absorb the divinity indigenous to us all.

A Zen Buddhist and Iyengar Yoga practitioner for the past 20 years, Maggie Lyon Varadhan lives and practices in New York City. Visit her at lyonlifestyle.com.



every breath you take

Whether you're on your mat or out in the world, your breath is your link to moments of grace.

Throughout your day, wherever you find yourself, take the opportunity to connect with the sacredness of everyday life.

Stand in **Tadasana** (**Mountain Pose**). Feel your feet planted solidly beneath you, your spine lifted, and your head floating evenly. Pay subtle attention to your breath.

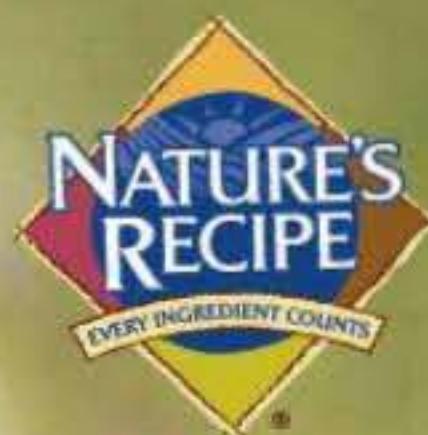
With each inhale, let your side ribs expand and your limbs root further into the earth. With each exhale, soften your belly.

Begin to let the rhythm of your inhale and exhale remind you of and amplify the sentiment of **svaha**. Accept the inhale as a divine blessing. With every exhale, offer yourself completely to the moment at hand.

In this way, you create the balance that's inherent in **svaha** and open yourself to the grace that's present even in the most banal pockets of everyday life. And you can then go on with your day—peaceful and at ease, wholly complete. M.V.

choose

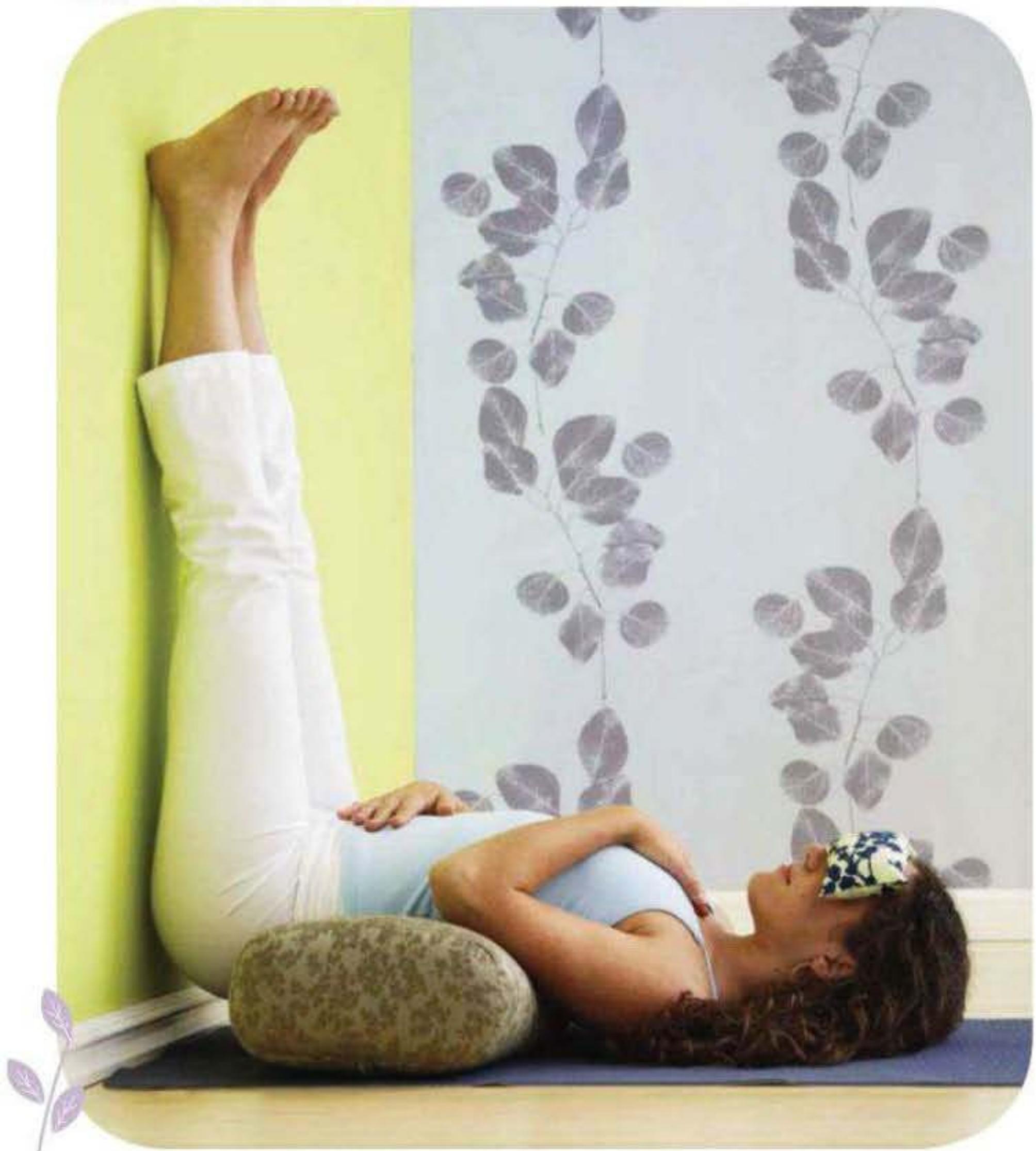
to take in someone without a home. Choose to feed him. Choose his bed. Choose to take it slow. Choose to show him around. Choose to be okay when he keeps his distance. Choose to show him what it means to have a friend. Choose to keep it up even when he's shy. Choose to pet him on the head when he finally chooses to be your dog.



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Pose for Pink Yoga Retreats, Libby Ross Foundation, New York City

Weekend retreats are led by yoga teacher and cancer survivor Tari Prinster. thelibbyrossfoundation.com

healing journey

Yoga proves to be an ideal approach to self-care for cancer survivors.

Breast cancer affects many of us: One in eight women in the United States will develop invasive breast cancer in her lifetime. The good news is that more women today are beating the illness. There are more than 2.5 million breast cancer survivors in the United States.

Yoga can be a valuable part of the process of healing and recovery from the disease, and classes for cancer patients and survivors are readily available. "Yoga can help women who have cancer find solace and learn to deeply care for themselves," says Linda Sparrowe, a yoga teacher who co-leads yoga and meditation retreats for women touched by cancer.

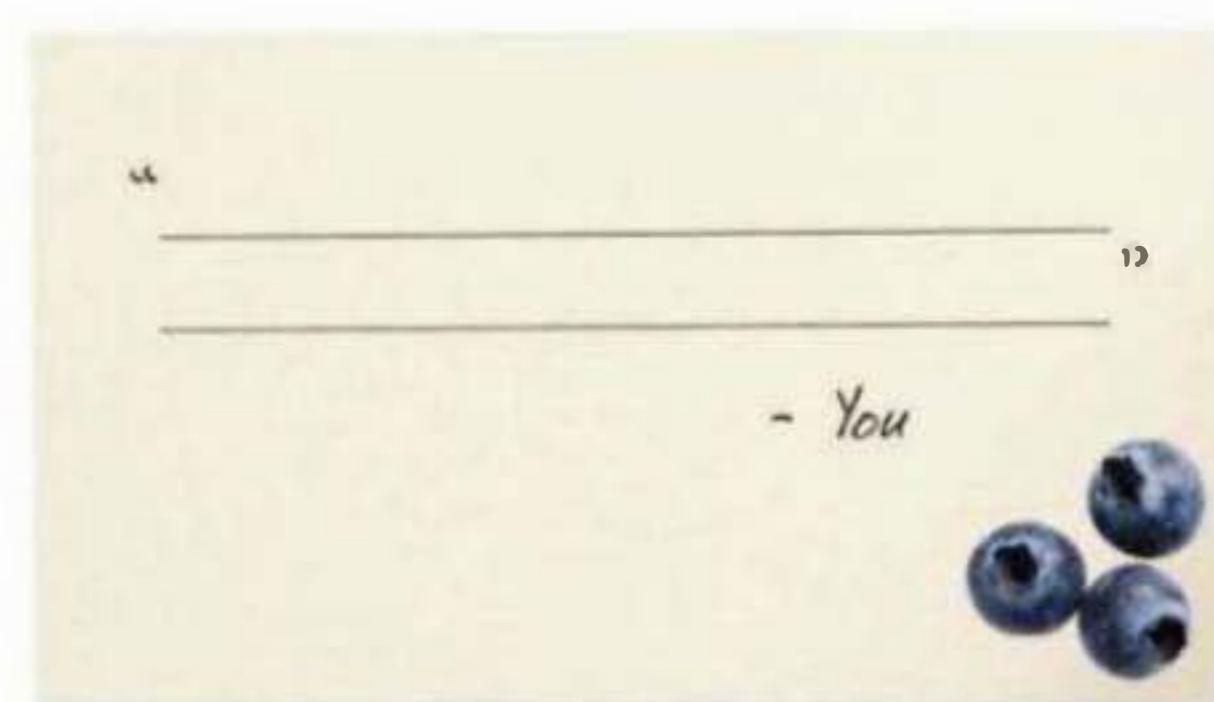
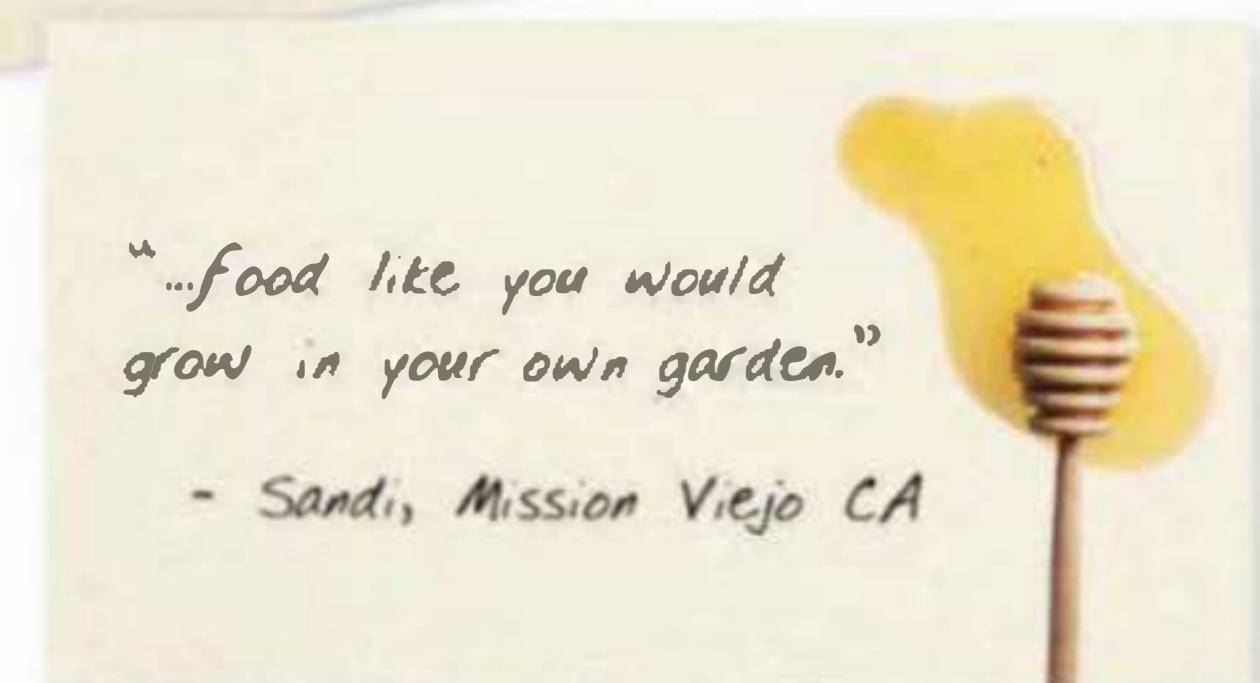
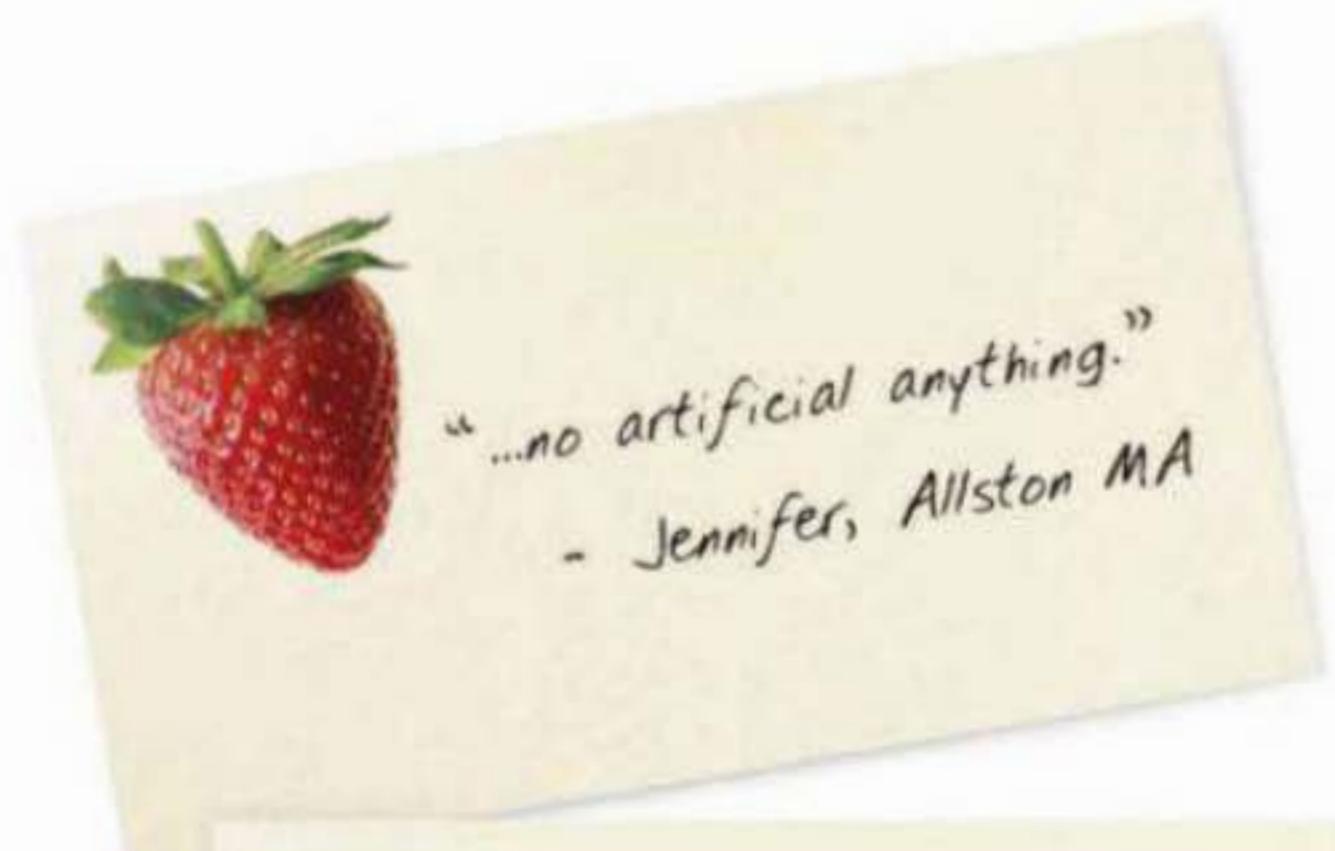
New academic research backs this up. Several studies published this year show that yoga offers effective relief from the physical

and mental effects of the disease and the side effects of treatment. These effects include symptoms such as fatigue, pain, swelling, stiffness, stress, and depression.

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, found that after practicing Iyengar Yoga twice weekly for 12 weeks, breast cancer survivors were less depressed and exhausted and felt greater vitality. In another study of Iyengar Yoga, conducted at Washington State University, Spokane, participants felt better physically and emotionally, and they had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol. This does more than reduce anxious feelings: Elevated levels of cortisol may contribute to cancer recurrence and earlier mortality among breast cancer survivors.

Yoga can also help survivors regain trust in their bodies. In a study at Indiana University, Bloomington, women who participated in an eight-week hatha yoga program were stronger and more flexible, felt less self-conscious about scars from surgeries, and were more accepting of their changed bodies. "Yoga helps us feel more comfortable with our bodies and ourselves," says the study's lead researcher, Van Marieke Puymbroeck, a professor of recreation therapy at Indiana University. "It helps us build inner resources to respond to life's challenges." KELLY McGONIGAL

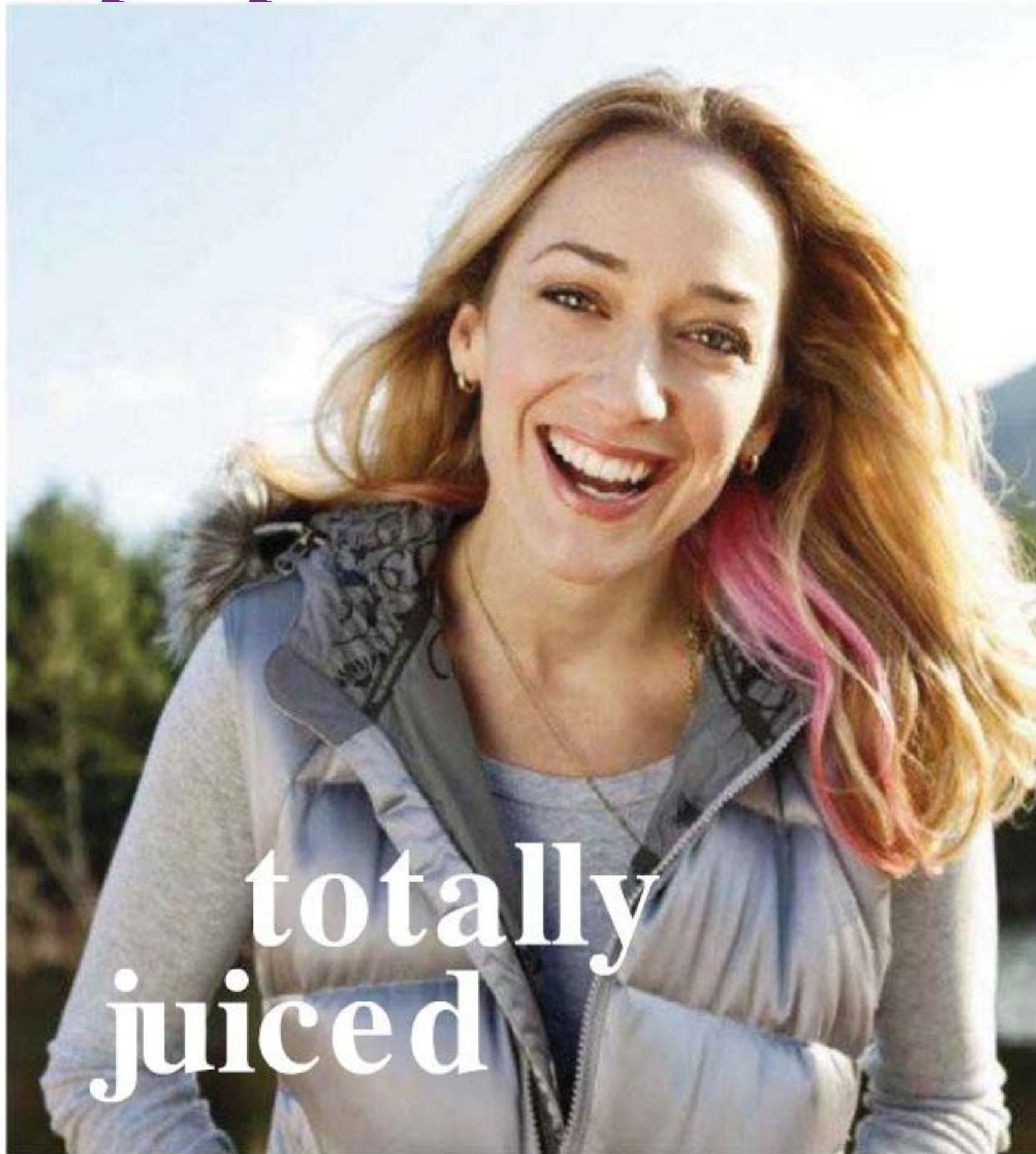
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Cancer survivor Kris Carr wants to get you juicing, meditating, and glowing with health.

With her cowboy boots, pink-streaked hair, and cheeky writing style, Kris Carr is not your everyday wellness warrior. After her cancer diagnosis eight years ago, the writer, documentary filmmaker, and motivational speaker learned firsthand the positive effect that an anti-inflammatory diet and lifestyle can have on chronic disease. With an online community drawing nearly 25,000 members, a blog drawing more than 100,000 daily visitors (visit crazysexylife.com), and a new book, *Crazy Sexy Diet*, the Jivamukti Yoga practitioner is inspiring thousands to take charge of their health.

This is your first book that wasn't written specifically for people with cancer. How does this program help the average person? This book is for anyone interested in looking great and feeling fantastic. It emphasizes balancing your body's pH by eating more lush whole foods, low-glycemic fruits, raw veggies, alkalizing green drinks, and superpowered green smoothies, while decreasing acidic foods like animal products, processed sugars, and starches.

What are a few easy first steps? Dump dairy and start making green juices and green smoothies. Look at your plate and cover more than half of it with greens as well as veggies. But it's not just what we're eating that affects our health; it's also what's eating us—how well we sleep, sweat, and love, and whether or not we're committing to our Down Dogs.

Why do you recommend meditation as an integral part of health? Inflammation is stress that comes from what you're eating, drinking, and thinking, and it's a root cause of chronic disease. For me, meditation is a way to get clear and focused and to reduce stress. I sit for 20 minutes in the morning, and I practice at night.

What do you tell people who might not be ready to radically overhaul their diets? It's not an all-or-nothing approach. You can't fail as long as you are willing to do something. Plus, I don't believe in perfection. Perfect is beige, and I want folks to live red-hot and juicy lives. It's really important that we wake up and start to take responsibility for what we put in our mouths. CHARITY FERREIRA

green goddess smoothie

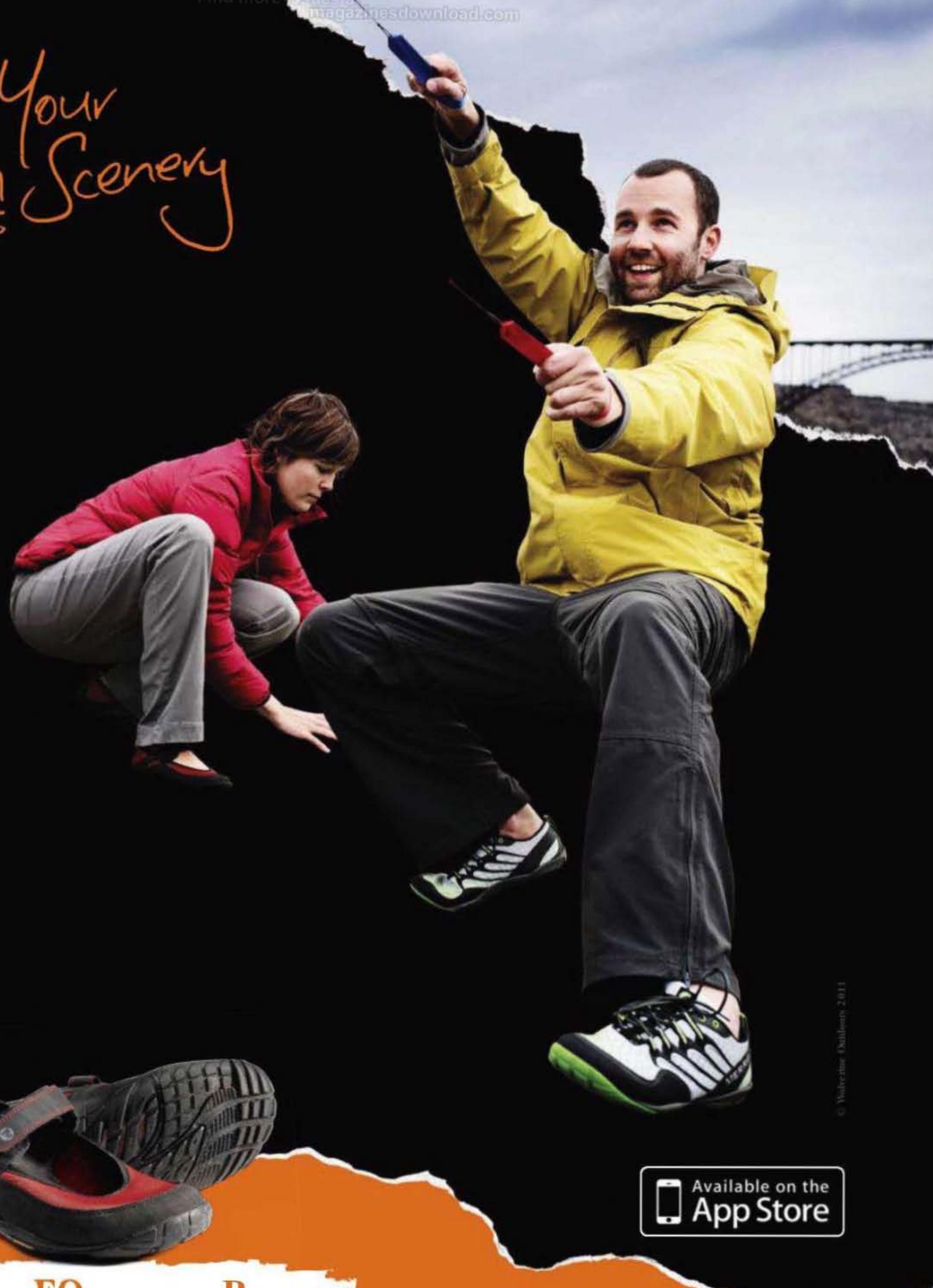
Start your day with a green smoothie, using these basic guidelines by Kris Carr:

- 1 avocado, peeled and pit removed
- 1-2 pieces of fruit, such as apple, pear, banana, or cantaloupe
- 1 cucumber
- 1 handful of kale, romaine lettuce, or spinach
- Coconut water or purified water
- Stevia, cinnamon, or cacao to taste (optional)

Combine ingredients in blender; varying the amounts to taste. Blend until smooth. Try substituting raw almond butter for the avocado.



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LET'S GET OUTSIDE

flowers overfear

After the earthquake in Japan, a yogini discovers there is strength in softening.

I have faced a lot of fear in my life. But as my Tokyo apartment building swayed and jolted on March 11 this year, I felt something new course through me: pure primal terror.

There was no time to think. Before I even realized it, I rolled myself and my little girl off the bed where we'd been napping. My field of vision narrowed to my daughter's face as we huddled on the floor and the building pitched like a carnival ride.

In the days and weeks afterward, along with most people, I continued flooding myself with fear. I kept watching the horrific tsunami footage. I kept clenching my jaw as chaos spilled out of the nuclear reactors. Yet when I applied the steady gaze of quiet inquiry, I saw that my home was intact, with electricity and running water. My loved ones were safe. Were we in any real danger? Who knew? Perhaps no more than usual.

I began intentionally melting away fear with compassion for my very fearful self. I did everything I knew to do. I surrounded myself with soothing physical activities like washing dishes. I pulled a warm sweater around my shoulders. I bought big, gorgeous bouquets of flowers. Mostly, I gazed at my daughter and felt myself soften with gratitude—that she was alive, that we were together; that she was still laughing and luminous.

The fear would still bubble up every few minutes. Each time, I would gently turn it, choosing gratitude instead. I was steadily changing my frequency. Each humble action I took brought me back to my body. I found that folding laundry was more effective than straight meditation. Deep calming breaths helped, but so did touching the earth. I discovered I could breathe in fear or breathe in freedom. Minute by minute, breath by breath, I keep choosing. ANNA KUNNECKE

when things feel scary

» Fear, like other difficult emotions, is a natural part of life. When you're afraid, be compassionate with yourself in working with your feelings. Try this practice for releasing fear:

Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair. Inhale, letting your abdomen expand, hold for a few seconds, and then exhale quickly through your mouth. Inhale again, holding the breath in your upper chest, and exhale through the mouth.

Now place one hand on your solar plexus and one on your heart. Breathe into the solar plexus,

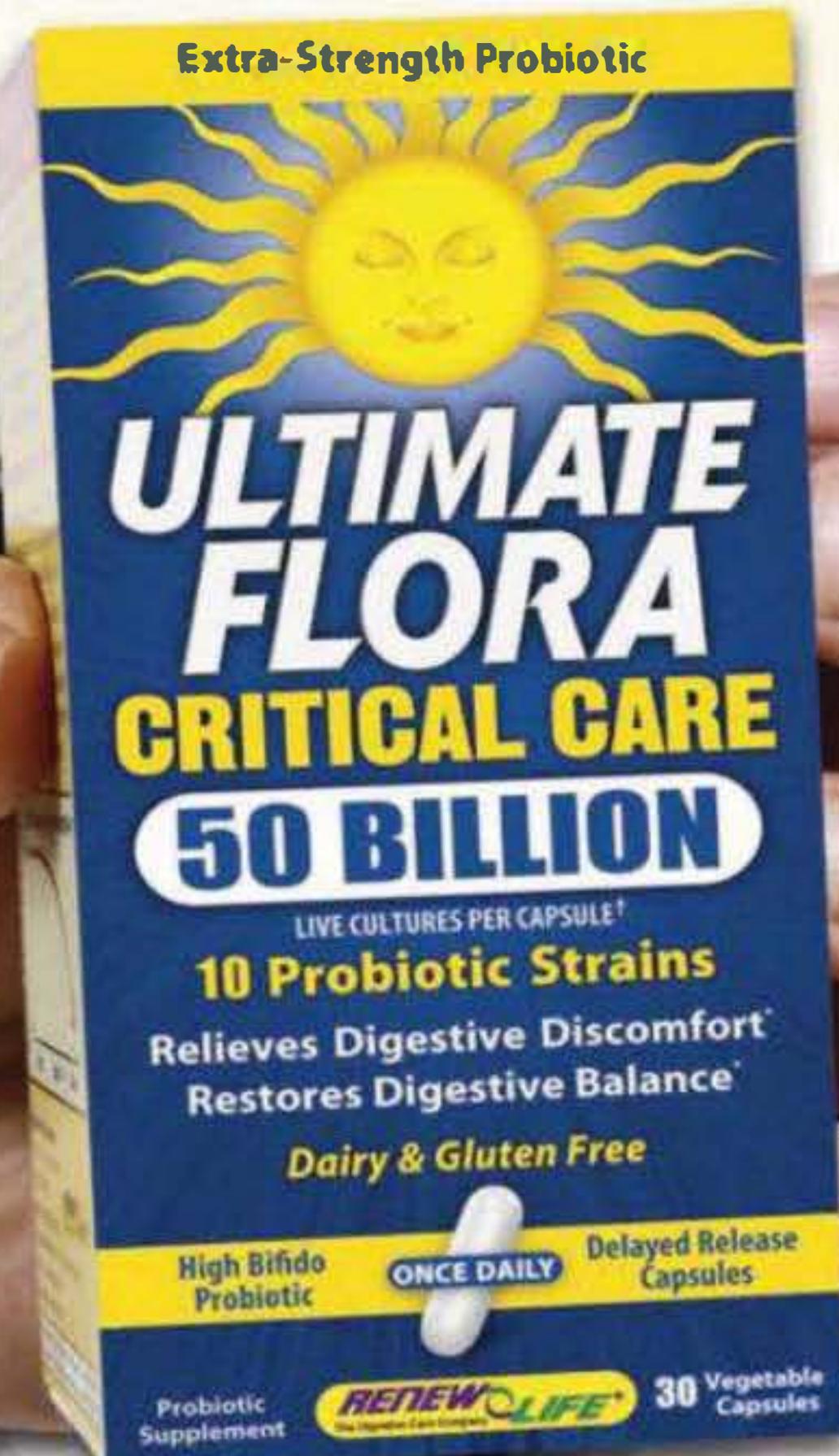


taking several slow breaths as you relax that area. Now breathe into and consciously relax the heart.

As you relax, witness your thoughts and emotions. Be present with whatever comes up, without judgment. If fear is present, make space for it. Let your fear freely arise, and allow it to release. Become centered in the part of you that witnesses every aspect of life without being lost in it.

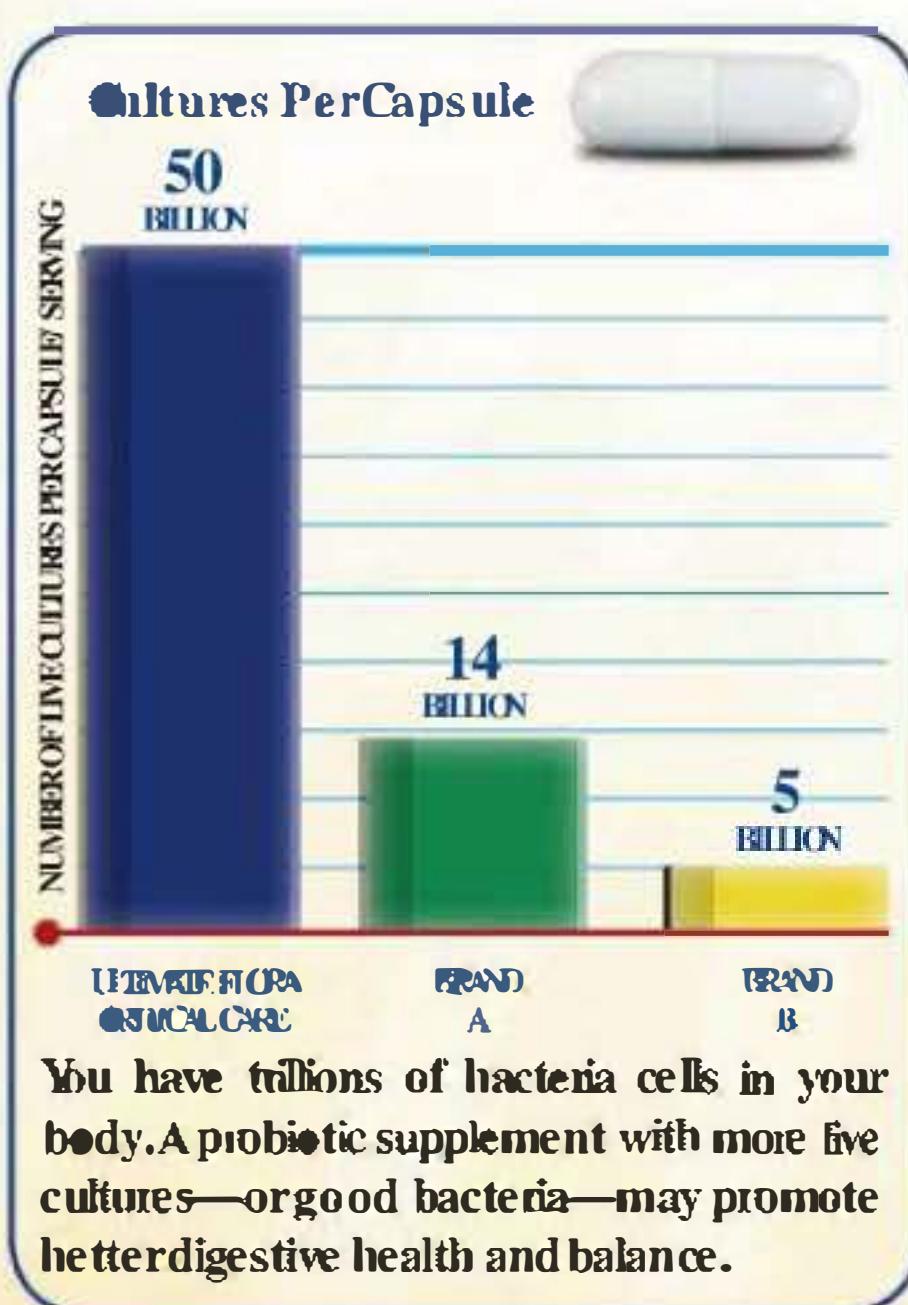
Swami Ramananda is a yoga teacher and the president of the San Francisco Integral Yoga Institute.

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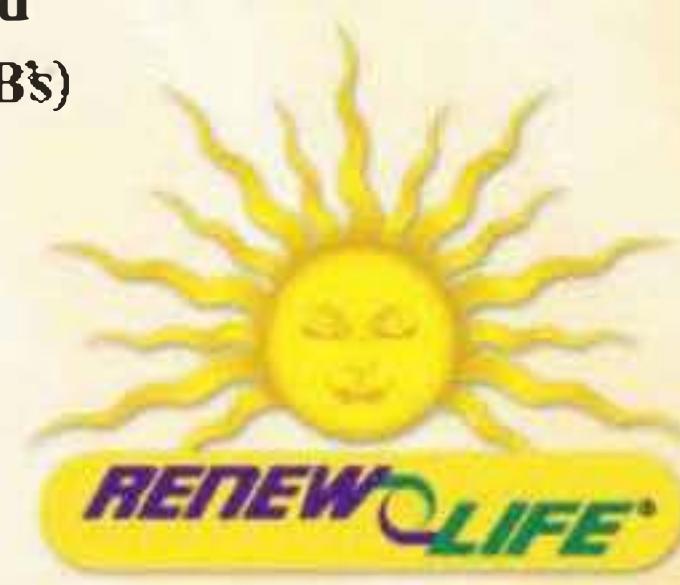
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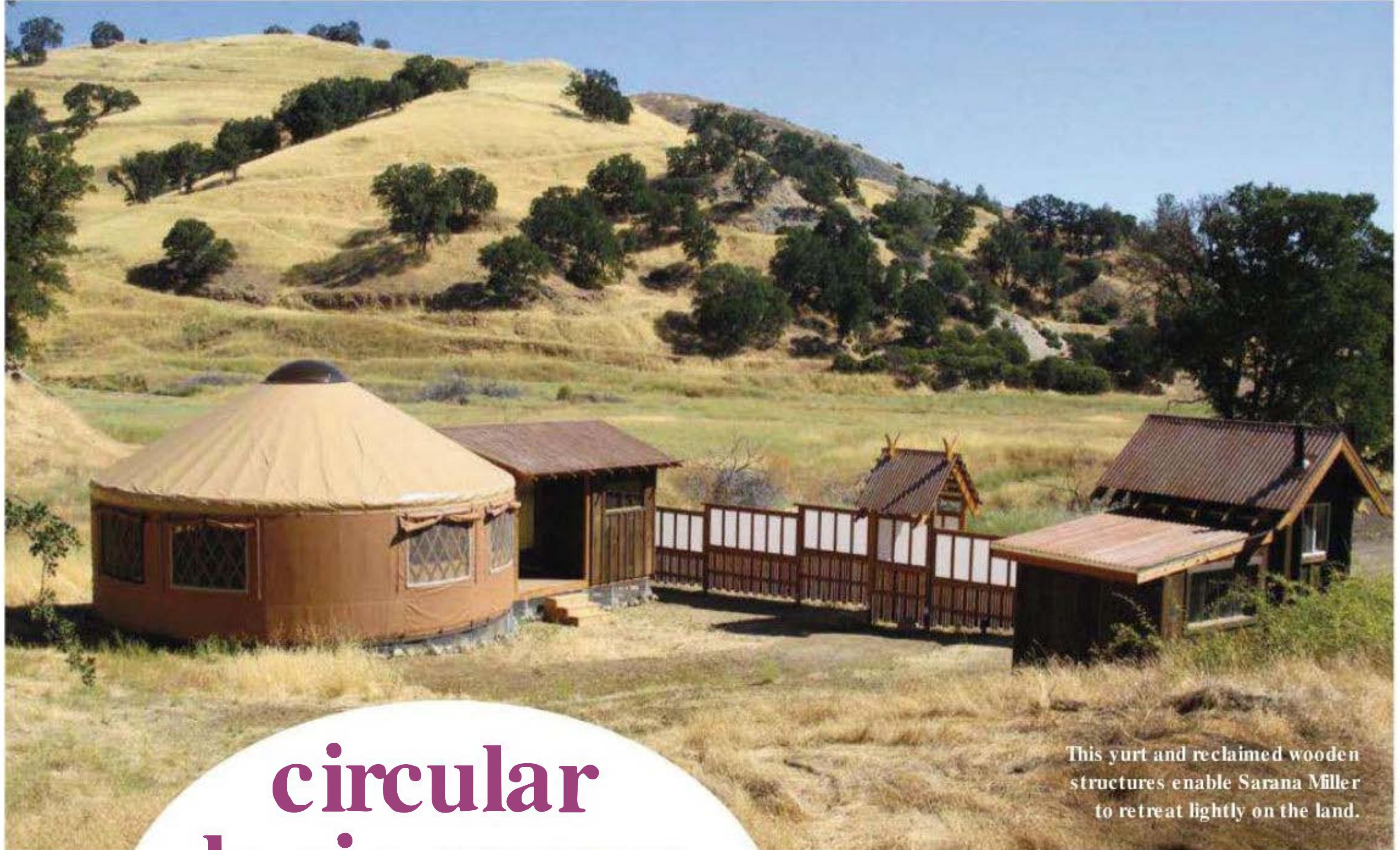
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circular logic

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>> If you've ever dreamed of having your own retreat space in nature, or even in your backyard, an ancient yet newly popular form of habitat may be the answer. Yurts, which originated as portable dwellings among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, are becoming a favorite affordable and eco-friendly building style among yoga practitioners, and are showing up as extra living or practice spaces, yoga studios, and vacation homes.

Made of canvas and wood, yurts are easy to construct and pleasantly open to the elements. "I love the feeling of being outdoors when you're indoors," says yoga teacher Sarana Miller, who built her yurt as a vacation getaway in Northern California. "The sounds of nature are right there—the rain, the hail, the creek."

Michelle Mazur, a yoga-therapy teacher in Brentwood, California, built her backyard yurt yoga studio to provide students with a sense of retreat from urban life. "When people look up through the skylight and see trees swaying, they can breathe more easily," she says.

Yurts are relatively affordable to build compared with houses. Kits typically run from \$4,000 to \$10,000, though most yurt owners spend more for extras such as a wooden base, insulation, and interior design. The low price tag appealed to Joyce Kendall, of Earth Heart Yoga in Laconia, New Hampshire, who built a yurt to house yoga workshops on her farm. She was also drawn to the uplifting feeling of the space, with its domed cathedral ceiling and

This yurt and reclaimed wooden structures enable Sarana Miller to retreat lightly on the land.

wooden rafters. "It's a sacred environment," Kendall says. "I love the energy of it."

Yurts are light on the land, requiring few raw materials. For her 440-square-foot yurt, Sarana Miller used a customizable kit and an assortment of reclaimed materials, including salvaged doors and windows. She added solar panels for electricity. "I wanted to have as little impact on the site as possible," she says. "I feel this sense of sanctuary here."

For some, the appeal of the yurt is simply its shape. "There's something to be said for not having corners," says Asia Szrek, a Kundalini Yoga teacher who lives in a yurt near Asheville, North Carolina. "Once you live in a round space, you never want to live in a square one again." LAUREN LADOCEOUR



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Chat (43)



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eating wisely || by Andrew Leonard

In search of a hot date-night cuisine, a writer explores the subtleties of spice.

slow seduction

My pantry boasts a new subcontinent, a shelf groaning under the weight of the spices necessary for authentic Indian cooking. Some are familiar: coriander, cumin, cayenne, mustard seeds, sticks of cinnamon, and whole cloves. Some, more mysterious: asafetida, black cardamom, fenugreek, mango powder, tamarind, turmeric. The names alone are poetry, but their scent and taste—after they're toasted and ground and fried in hot oil—are the stuff of purest magic, conjuring up a version of India in my kitchen more evocative than a Bollywood movie binge.

I am a fan of spicy foods and ancient civilizations. No one who knows me well was surprised

Toasted spices and fresh herbs add intrigue to potatoes and cauliflower.
(recipe page 40)

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eating wisely

when I declared, early on the first day of 2011, that my New Year's resolution was to learn how to cook Indian food. A long-time student of Chinese history and Mandarin, I had already devoted more than a decade to mastering Sichuan food. I was ready for another project, and not just for my culinary edification. A cook in the San Francisco Bay Area learns quickly that meat-heavy Sichuanese cuisine doesn't always mesh well with the dining needs of the yoga-loving, vegetarian-leaning Northern California masses. Twice-cooked pork belly, to be blunt, often fails as date-night fare.

But Indian food abounds with fabulous meat-free options. The Hindus don't eat beef, and the Muslims don't eat pork, and the Jains eschew meat altogether. In India, necessity has been the mother of vegetarian invention. The Himalayan Mountains might separate China and India, but it didn't seem like such a big jump, conceptually, to imagine I could soon become as adept at concocting curries and pilafs as I was at producing kung pao chicken and scallion pancakes. And what could be better than learning a bunch of new recipes that simultaneously satisfied my yen for stimulating exotica and improved my dating life?

ENLIGHTENED HUNGER

Except—India's dazzling vegetarian accomplishments are embedded in thousands of years of deeply meaningful religious and spiritual thinking. The sacred cow is not a flirtation device. Buddhist and Jain vegetarianism is motivated by the goal of reducing the suffering of all living things. Embracing a spiritually inflected cuisine just to improve my seduction odds seemed crass and manipulative. I imagined Buddha frowning. For my sins, I would be reincarnated as a cauliflower.

This internal contradiction stymied me until I came across this couplet in the second-century BCE Taoist classic *The Way and Its Power*:

Therefore the Sage
Considers the belly not the eye

My stomach growled when I read this passage. The enlightened person, Lao Tzu is suggesting, chooses a course of action

based on what is within him rather than what is external. I love to eat Indian food, and I also thrill to discovery, exploration, and the challenge of negotiating alien complexity. I should learn to cook Indian food, I realized, not because of what might happen to me as the result of a successful quest, but because the journey would be pleasing.

A few minutes of Googling led me to an out-of-print used copy of Madhur Jaffrey's gorgeously illustrated *A Taste of India* and Julie Sahni's *Classic Indian Cooking*. A quick trip to the nearest specialty Indian market, and I had everything I could possibly need, hence my pantry rearranging. Soon, I was roasting black cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, black pepper, cumin, and coriander and grinding them into my own garam masala, contemplating how manyways I could be auazied by potatoes and spending a surprising amount of time frying onions.

I experimented with the technical challenges of layered pilafs—rice dishes infused with spices and onions and lentils. I discovered a love of Bengali mustard sauce—a ravishingly stimulative mixture of freshly ground black and yellow mustard seeds, cayenne, turmeric, and salt that goes equally well with foods as different as okra and shrimp. I fried paper-thin papadums in hot oil, grated the meat of fresh coconut, and painstakingly pushed sour, sticky tamarind pulp through a sieve to make my own paste.

If I learned one thing, it's that Indian food is slow food. The alchemical wonder of all those spice combinations isn't instantaneous; it is not uncommon for Indian dishes to taste better after a day or two in the refrigerator than they did when first prepared. Cooking Indian means patiently marinating, stewing, and simmering. Among the steps necessary for one of the first dishes I attempted: frying six cups of thinly sliced onions until they turned light brown, a process that takes around 30 minutes.

Sahni's instruction to stir "constantly to prevent burning," I discovered, was not to be taken lightly. Even at medium heat, thinly slivered onions will burn if you turn your back on them. I have cooked entire

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eating wisely

Sichuan meals from start to finish in the amount of time it took me to fry some onions as a preliminary step in an Indian dish—stirring patiently, waiting for that perfect red-brown color, my mind ranging far and wide.

LAYERS OF FLAVOR

After a few months of perfecting my onion technique, I was ready for a dinner party. I invited half a dozen guests for Punjabi pilaf, Bengali okra, and gobhi matar rasedar—a cauliflower dish that Sahni describes as a specialty of the Brahmins in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Conversation slowed as my guests savored each bite: the pilaf, with scents of cardamom, cinnamon, whole cloves, and bay leaves; the okra, succulent but not oily, exploding with mustard power. I had made those dishes previously and knew what to expect. But the cauliflower was a revelation. From simple, unassuming ingredients evolved a delicious and sensuous complexity.

One begins, as one so often does, by frying the spices: first, cumin seeds, then, cumin power, coriander, turmeric, and hot red pepper flakes. Next, the cauliflower, potatoes, and peas. Add some mashed tomatoes and a few cups of boiling water. Simmer. The result, a mixture of textures and colors evoking the intricacy of a painstakingly assembled sand mandala. And like a sand mandala, it disappeared soon after its completion, devoured by my appreciative guests.

In the past, I had regaled my friends and potential love interests with showy stir-fries, fiery dishes that jumped up and cried out for attention like two-year-olds on the edge of a tantrum. This meal, however, beckoned with a slower, more sensual, less impatient enticement. Guaranteed date-night fare? Only time will tell—though there have got to be easier ways to impress a date. But the real seduction that happened in my kitchen, as I studied and stirred and toasted and tasted, was my own.

Andrew Leonard is a staff writer for Salon.com. In addition to his exotic-spice shelf, he has three woks hanging in his kitchen.

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Pomelo and Coconut Salad

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

- 1 large pink or white pomelo, sectioned
- 1 cup (or more) freshly grated mature coconut, cut into long shreds, or a julienne of young coconut
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 2 to 3 green chilies, seeded and finely chopped

Set out the pomelo sections in a single layer on a platter. Sprinkle with the coconut. Strew with the fresh cilantro and green chilies. No need for anything else. Alternatively, if the pieces of pomelo are irregular, you can lightly toss everything together.

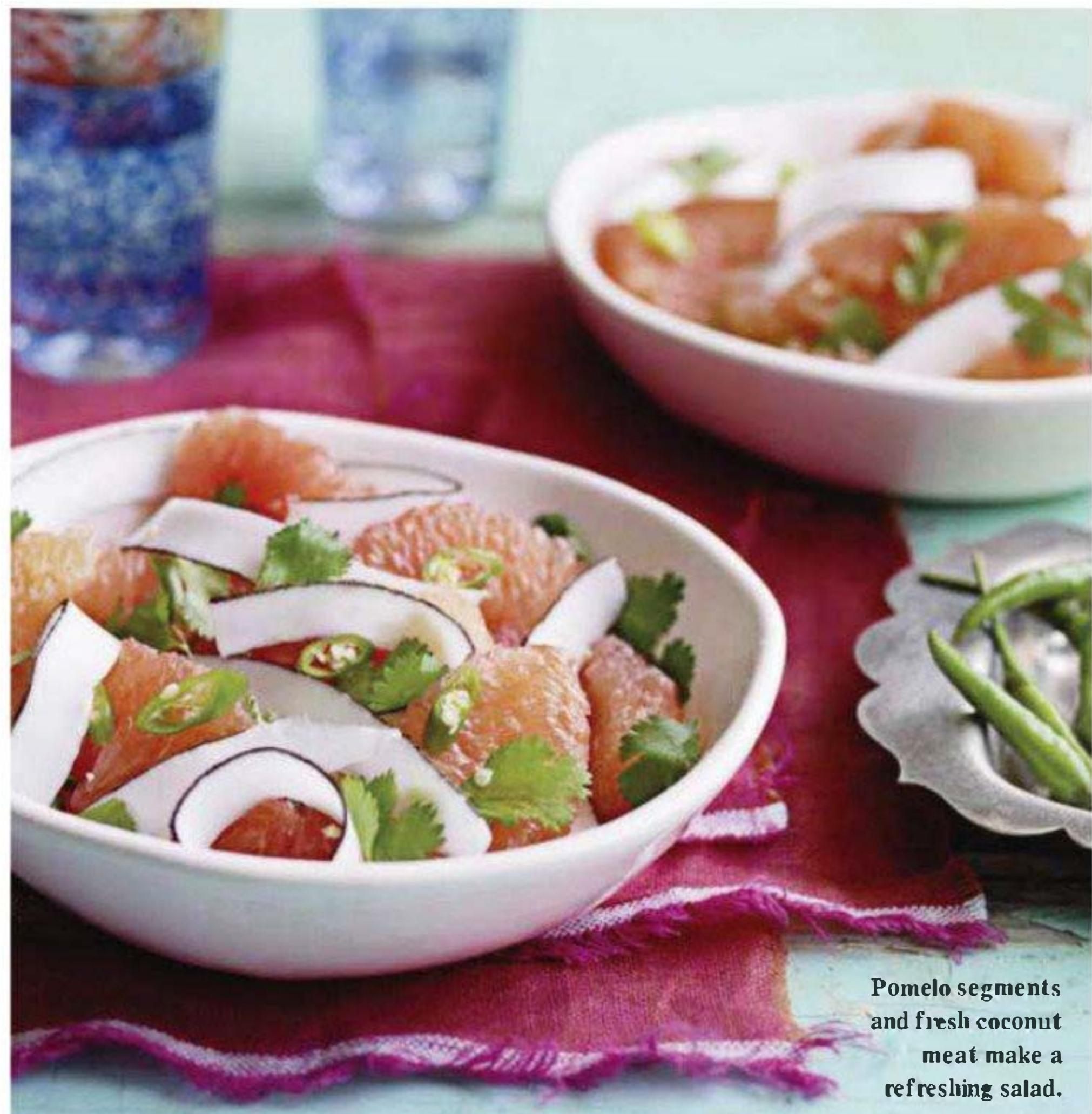
Recipe printed with permission from *My Bombay Kitchen*, by Niloufer Ichaporia King (University of California Press, 2007).

Cauliflower, Green Peas, and Potatoes in Spicy Herb Sauce

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 1 small head cauliflower
- 2 medium-sized potatoes, peeled
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ½ to 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ cup ghee or light vegetable oil
- ½ cups shelled fresh or frozen peas
- ½ cups finely chopped tomatoes
- 3 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh coriander leaves

1 Cut cauliflower into 1½-inch florets. Peel the central stem and cut into ¼-inch slices. Dice potatoes.



Pomelo segments and fresh coconut meat make a refreshing salad.

- 2 Measure spices and place them, along with all the vegetables, next to the stove.
- 3 Heat the ghee over medium-high heat in a deep, heavy-bottomed frying pan. Add cumin seeds and fry until brown, about 20 seconds. Add ground cumin, coriander, turmeric, and red pepper flakes. Stir for a moment and immediately add cauliflower, potatoes, and fresh (but not frozen) green peas.
- 4 Stir constantly until the vegetables begin to brown, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and salt, and continue cooking until mixture thickens and the fat begins to separate from the sauce, about 15 minutes. (If using frozen peas, add now.)
- 5 Continue cooking for an additional 5 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped coriander leaves and serve.

Okra with Mustard Seeds

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

- 1 pound whole, fresh okra
- 1 tablespoon black mustard seeds

- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard seeds
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ to ¾ teaspoon cayenne
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon nigella seeds (optional)
- 2 fresh, hot green chilies, seeded and sliced

- 1 Cut off the very tips of the okra pods and peel the cone-shaped tops.
- 2 Grind mustard seeds in a spice grinder and place in a small bowl. Stir in turmeric, cayenne, salt, and ½ cup water.
- 3 Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add nigella seeds. Ten seconds later, add okra. Stir over medium-low heat for 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Add spice mixture and chilies.
- 4 Cover, reduce heat, and simmer gently for 5–8 minutes, or until okra is tender.

Recipes printed with permission from *A Taste of India*, by Madhur Jaffrey (John Wiley & Sons, 1988).



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Name:

Nikki Estrada

Hometown:

Novato (Marin County), CA

Who was I in my past life?

I entered college as a math major and began flying lessons to pursue a private pilot license.

Why did I start teaching yoga?

I fell in love with yoga while at school in Santa Barbara – never thought I would teach but was asked to take a teacher training program.

What special quality do I bring to the YogaWorks teacher training?

All the challenges, obstacles and discoveries I've made both in my personal practice and life, as well as the countless hours of teaching, have greatly shaped my training skills.



My favorite thing about the YogaWorks Teacher Training?

Definitely the philosophy portion - delving into the yoga sutras with a group of people interested in self-examination. The most amazing breakthroughs happen in our circles.



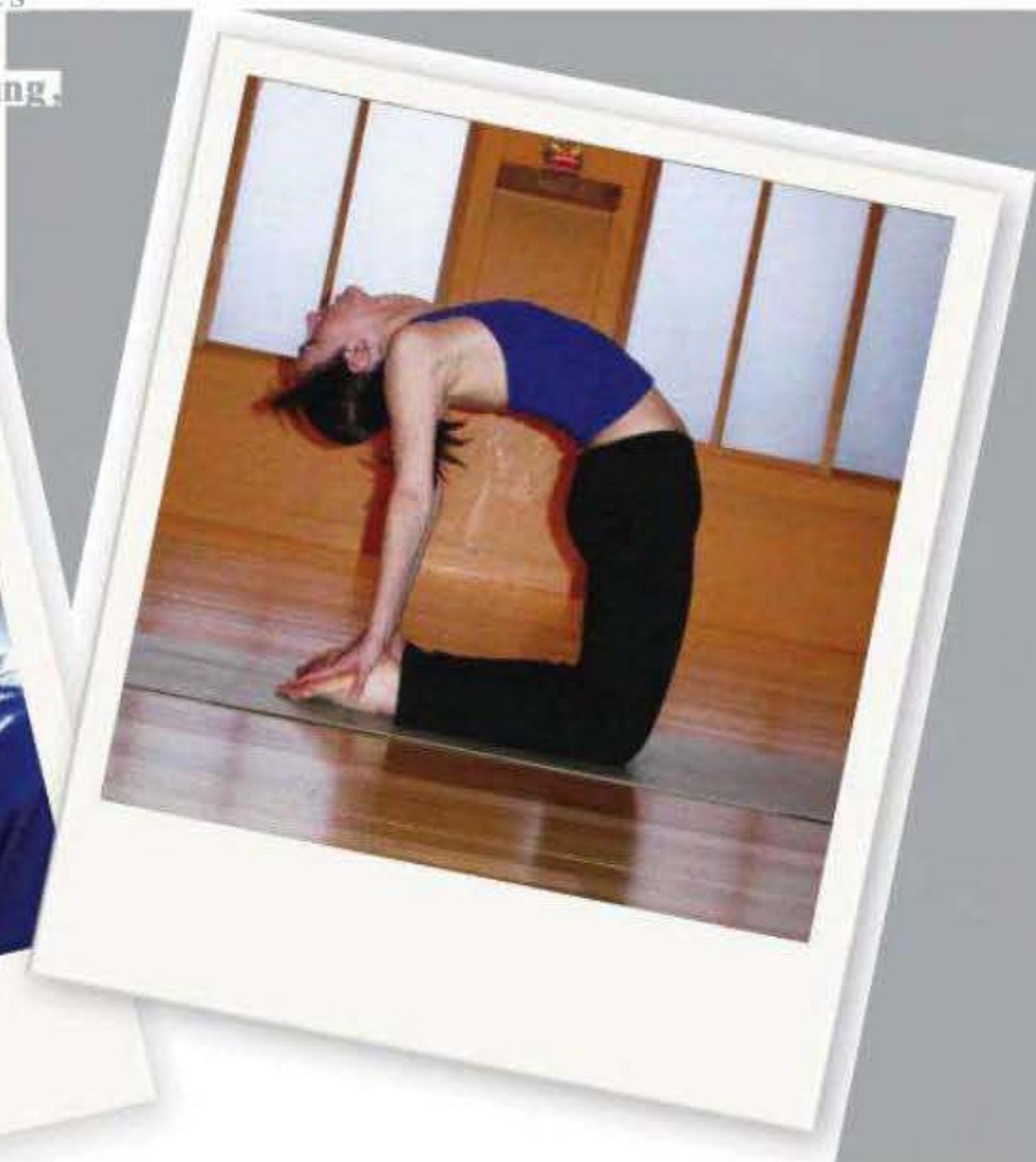
A fun fact about me?

My 5 year old daughter, Keira, says "my mom is fun because she takes me places and plays cool games!"



My 2012 teacher training schedule?

I will be teaching 200-hour trainings in San Francisco and in Healdsburg in January, and in Mill Valley in September.



For more of Nikki's story go to
[youtube.com/YogaWorks](https://www.youtube.com/YogaWorks)



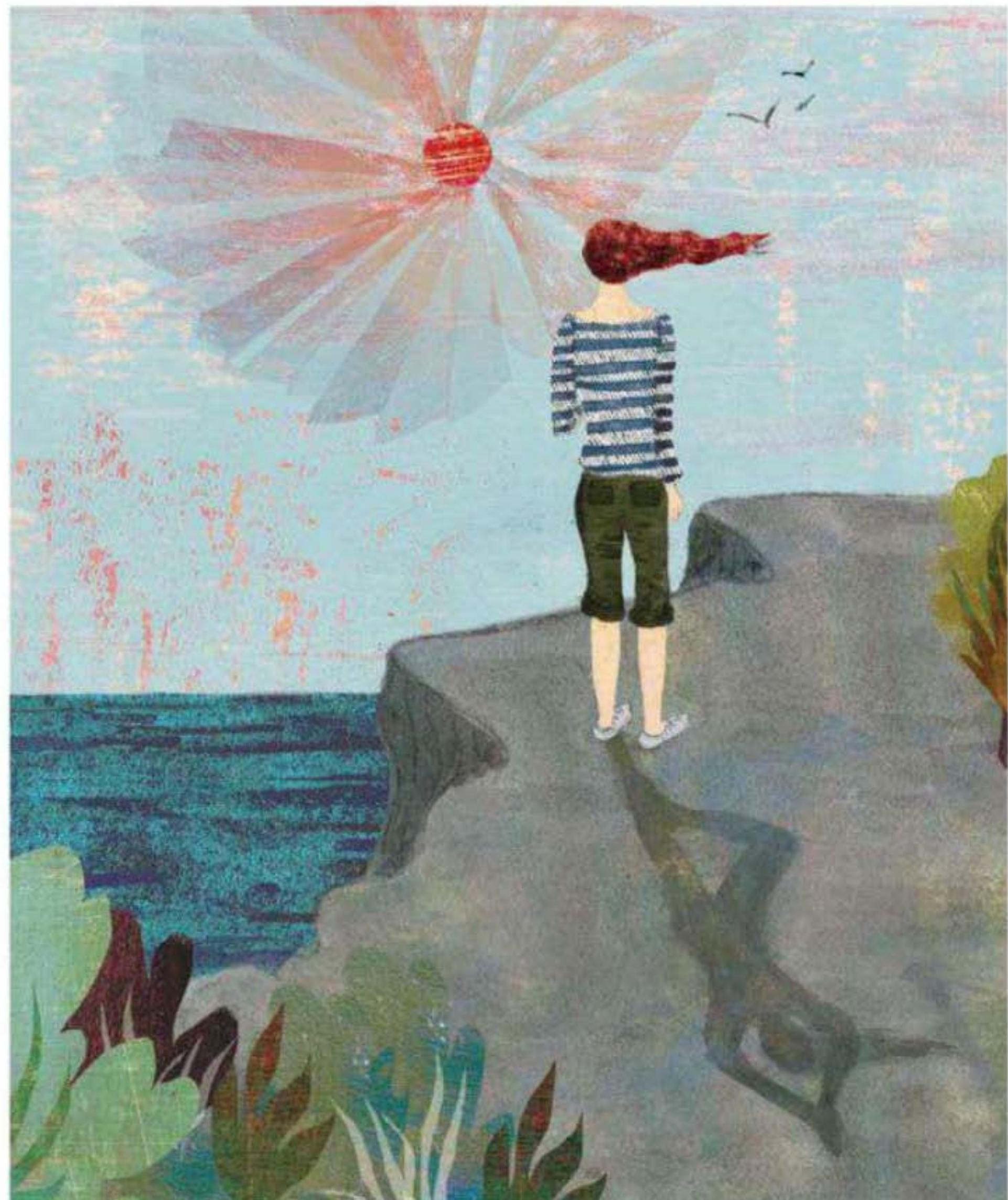
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navigating change (

Use these 7 core yogic
teachings to support you through
radical life changes



Although I have no statistical evidence, I'm convinced that when you start practicing yoga and meditation, you invite major changes into your life. Those changes start from within: Maybe your practice alters the way you define personal integrity; maybe it unleashes a deep longing in your heart or shows you truths you've been hiding from yourself.

Soon, these inner shifts seep into your external life. They make you question the way you do things and nudge you to live life differently. You might notice that your practice has triggered a mysterious process that I call "karmic acceleration." In other words, having a yoga practice tends to speed up the way your relationships and life scenarios play out. So instead of putting up with an unhappy relationship or an unsatisfying job for, say, 10 years, you may find yourself bulldozing through it in 2. And not because you're flaky.

Most of us who practice yoga will, at some point, find ourselves facing **internally motivated choices** that can radically alter our lives. That's when we need to learn how to bring our practice off the mat so it can help us birth the emerging self that change promises to bring forth—and support us as we work through the fear

and confusion that change can bring. I think of all this as I listen to Rita, the 37-year-old owner of a yoga studio in Pennsylvania who has been contemplating divorce for nearly five years. Her 18-year marriage has long felt emotionally dead. She and her husband rarely spend time together, and when they do, they tend to argue over issues big and small. Part of the problem is that their lives don't match: She's a dedicated yogi and environmentalist; he thinks spiritual practice is a big yawn and that climate change

wisdom

is unproven. It's been years since they've talked about anything except household matters and their teenage daughter. Yet to break up the marriage would be to end life as she knows it. After nearly 15 years

Yoga can give us the strength and insight we need to navigate the most radical forms of change.

out of the mainstream job market, Rita is not sure how she would cope financially, much less run her yoga studio without her husband's support. Then, of course, there is her daughter's well-being to consider. So, although her gut has been telling her she needs to create a different life, Rita is seized with terror when she thinks about what it would mean to get divorced. And so she puts it off.

I am a veteran of several radical life-scenario changes, so it's not hard for me

to imagine how she feels. In my mid-20s, I ended an unhappy marriage; in my late 20s, I left a perfectly satisfactory journalism career and the world of family and friends to live in a spiritual community; 30 years later, I felt called to leave that community, move across the country, and begin an entirely new life.

In two of those situations, it took me several years to take the plunge. I wanted to be sure I was doing the right thing—and let's face it, life change is scary, especially when other people's lives are involved and you don't know what is waiting on the other side. Even contemplating a divorce, a career change, or a cross-country move can bring up core survival fears, which can surface in many ways: as health issues, nightmares, escapist behaviors such as overeating, lingering indecision, or a counterphobic tendency to leap out of the situation without a plan, just to get the whole thing over with.

Believe it or not, these core survival fears rise up even when the radical life

change is positive. Stress studies show that "life-enhancing" events, like getting married, starting a new job, or finally getting a longed-for opportunity, are often just as stressful as negative ones (think of a bride breaking down in tears before her wedding, or of the young man who dropped out of a prestigious graduate program at Columbia because he missed his life in San Francisco).

In other words, change can be scary, even when you've initiated the changes yourself. What if people get hurt? How will you live with yourself if your choice turns out to be a disaster? Do you have the skills to deal with the confusion and chaos of the process? These questions paralyze Rita, and they're the kind of questions that will sometimes keep us lingering in stagnant or painful situations until an outside force makes the move for us.

Yoga—in its widest sense—can give us the strength and insight we need to navigate the most radical forms of change. Equally as important as the practices of yoga are some of yoga's basic (and highly



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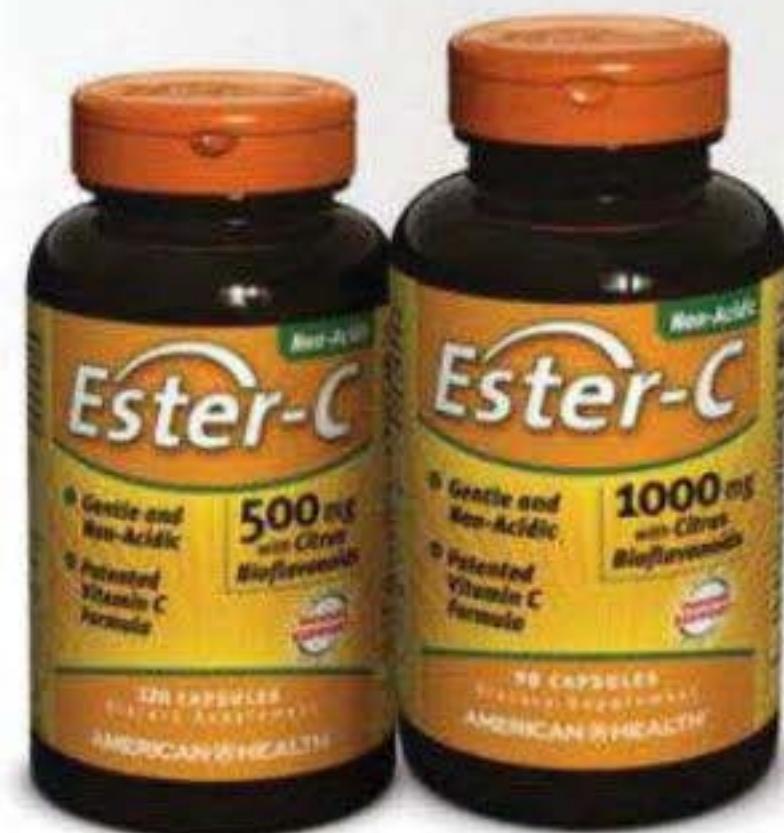
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wisdom

applicable) teachings—the recognition that we affect the exterior by working on the interior, that behind the diversity of life lies a fundamental oneness, that real strength is found in stillness, and that our true Self is not the shifting, fearful, egoic person that we sometimes seem to be.

One test of your yoga practice is how well it serves you during a time of big change. Yogic teachings won't necessarily keep you from feeling scared, overwhelmed, or confused. But they can rise up within you like a wise friend to guide you through those feelings so that you don't get lost in them. They can even help you avoid getting mired in indecision, or jumping impulsively without thinking things through.

Over the years, I've formed the habit of turning inward during times of transition and confusion, and asked for a helpful teaching. Much of the time, it's the same teachings that come up again and again. Below, I offer you seven core yogic instructions that will help you navigate radical change.

1 know that change is inevitable

The Buddhist Doctrine of Impermanence, annica, tells us that change is inevitable, continuous, and unavoidable. Everything changes. Just realizing that fact can protect you from turning to that most disempowering of reactions to change: "Why me?"

What the Buddhists call impermanence, a Tantric yogi would ascribe to the ever-changing nature of shakti—the intrinsic, dynamic power at the heart of life. Shakti is the cosmic, divine feminine energy that continually brings things into manifest being, keeps them going for a while, then dissolves them. Every moment, every enterprise, every cell, is part of this flow of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. This flow is happening on a macrocosmic level—as the flow of seasons, tides, and cultures—and on a microcosmic level, through the various shifts in your physical states, the ups and downs of your life, and the flow of thoughts and emotions in your mind. If you understand the divine nature

of the process of change, it becomes easier to greet change with honor, surrender to it, and even partner with it as you continue on your path.

2 view the change as an initiation

In traditional societies, every phase of life was regarded as an initiation into a new way of being and was marked with a ceremony that often asked the initiates to step into the unknown in some way, whether it was observing a prayer vigil, spending the night in darkness, or answering questions that tested their skills. Nowadays, we don't always do a ceremony, but we still undergo initiations. Changing careers, moving to a new city, deciding to go back to school, are all initiatory experiences, because they ask you to step outside your habits, test your skills, and, for a time, inhabit the unknown. More, each of these changes will subtly or even dramatically redefine you. You won't be quite the same person after you step out of the old situation and

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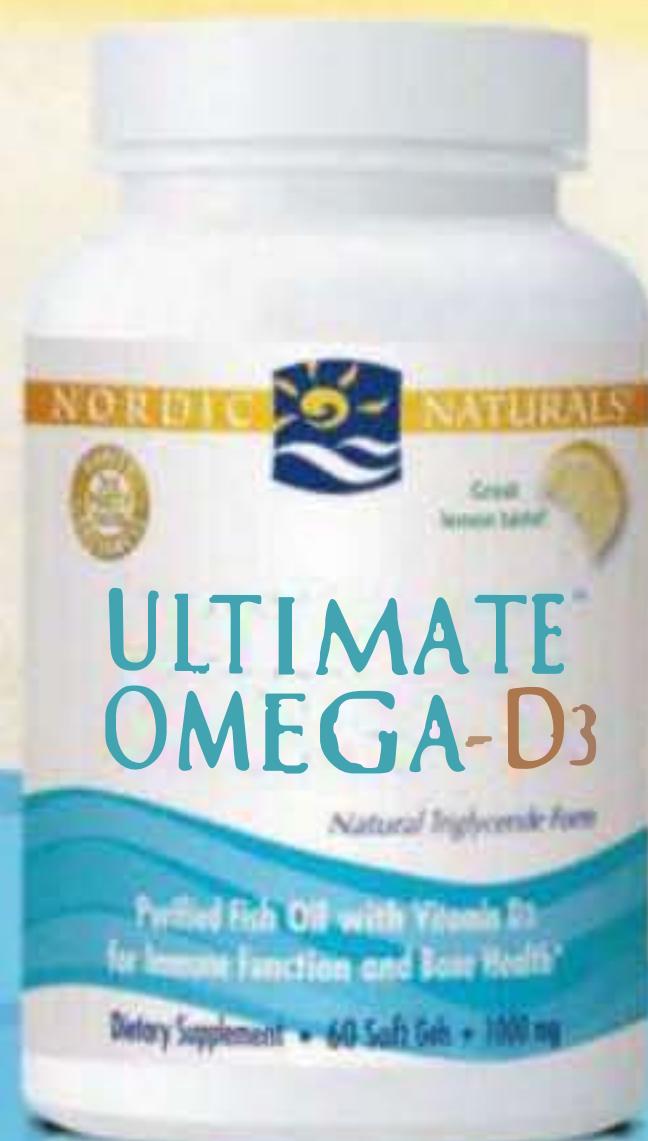
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into the new. The change itself, if you go through it consciously, is the doorway into the next stage of growth—one that propels you into a deeper relationship with yourself and the world.

An example: Twenty-four-year-old Frances accepted a job offer to teach English in Seoul, then freaked out when she got there, overwhelmed by loneliness and culture shock. What persuaded her to stay was recognizing the ways in which being a foreigner freed her from old self-descriptions and helped her find a new way of being herself. Similarly, when your life is changing, consider the ways in which the change will expand you, teach you about yourself, show you both your limits and your capacity to move beyond them. The more you can accept this as an initiation process, the easier it is to discover the gifts of change.

3 meditate through uncertainty

The deep uncertainty that arises during processes of change is perhaps the most

daunting part of the experience. Why? Because a true change process will involve surprises, reversals, false starts, and periods of coming to a dead halt. In these moments, you're likely to experience fear, anxiety, anger, irritability, sadness, grief, and the physical and psychological contraction that often goes along with feeling uncertain and unclear. Your gut tightens, and your mind begins spinning one of your victim stories: your worst-case-scenario story, or your "I just don't have what it takes" story, or your "I'll never get what I need" story. And your next move is nearly always some form of escape. You turn on the TV, eat something, or call a friend to complain.

But the real antidote to the discomfort of uncertainty is to move into it rather than away from it. You connect to the way the discomfort feels in your body. You let yourself feel it. You let go of the story that inevitably accompanies feelings of discomfort. And you just stay present with yourself and with your feelings, without resistance or expectation. The more you

can be present with uncertainty, the more you can let the change process take place naturally and effectively.

It's much easier to stay steady through a life-change process when you have a meditation practice, because meditation teaches you how to keep going back into your center, the core awareness that is your contact point with the Self and that aligns your individual consciousness with the heart of the universe. Your meditation practice can be as simple as attending to the breath or repeating a mantra, or as subtle as tuning in to the awareness that knows what you're thinking, or as physically centering as breathing into the heart. The important thing is that it connects you to your innate sense of being, to the Presence inside you.

4 uncover your truest desire

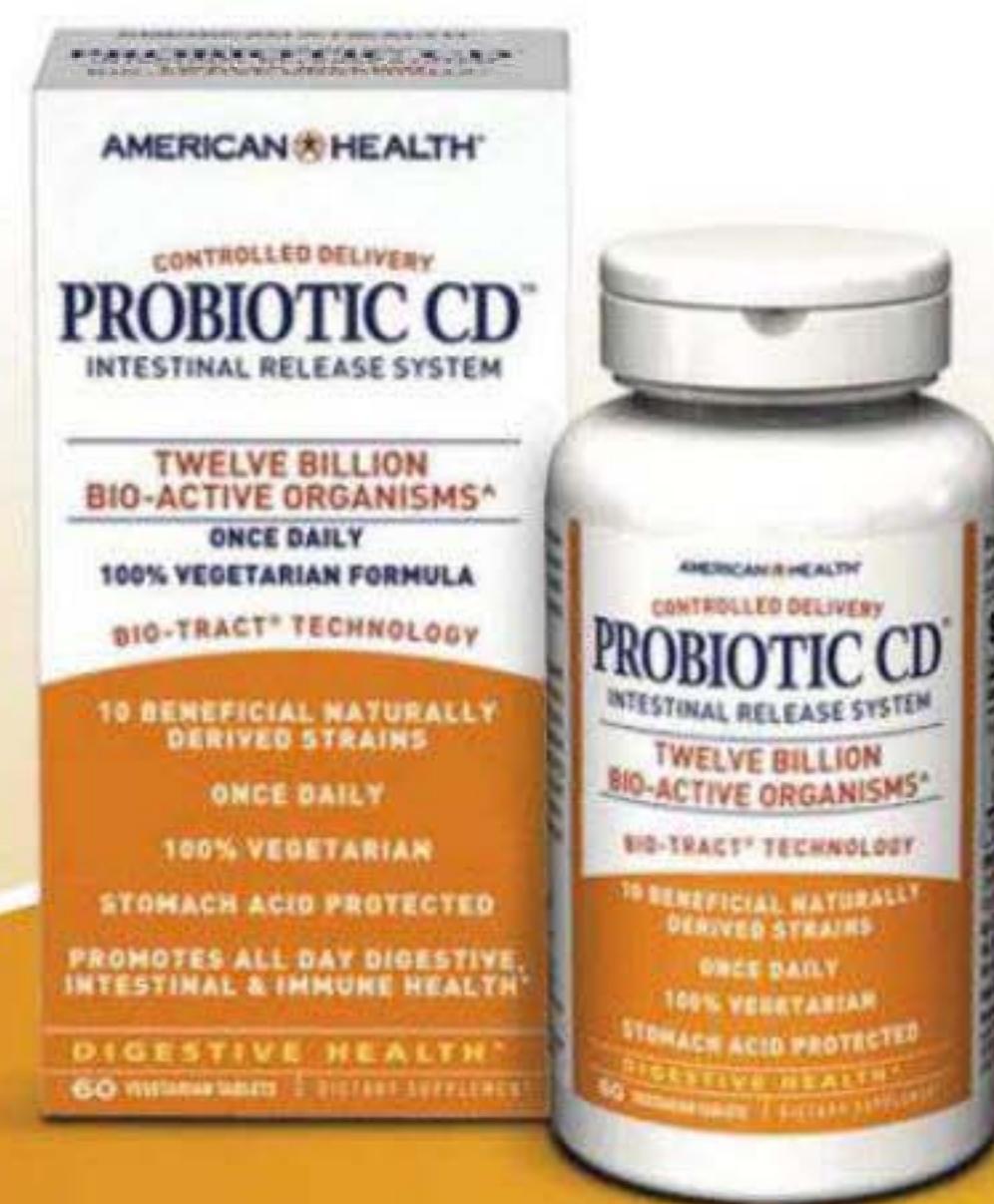
Self-inquiry, or *atma vichara*, is the core yogic process for navigating change. It's a simple but effective process of asking yourself core questions such as, "What is my

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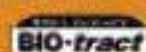
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true desire in this situation?" or "What outcome would be the best for everyone?" As answers surface, write them down.

Next, sit for a moment in meditation, following your breath, until you feel a sense of connection to Presence. Say to yourself, "May my deeper Self, the teacher inside me, tell me what is the right thing to do." Then ask yourself the self-inquiry questions again and write down whatever responses come up, even if some of them seem irrelevant.

Now, look at what you've written and look for common threads that should give you a sense of what your deeper Self wants for you. Getting in touch with your deepest, truest desire will help you organize the entire change process.

5 set a strong intention

The next step is to make a sankalpa—a clearly articulated, affirmative statement about what you intend to do. When you make a true sankalpa, you call on the power of your personal will and align your

personal will with the cosmic will. If you have gone through the self-inquiry process and have a sense of what your true desire is, you should be able to make a sankalpa that is in line with your truest wish. The deeper the alignment between your core desire and your intention, the more likely you are to successfully initiate a life change that supports that alignment.

That said, it's important to recognize that your sankalpa will change according to the time and the circumstance. At one point, the sankalpa may be, "I have a job that I love and that allows me to spend time with my children." At another time it may be, "I am skillfully creating steppingstones to finding a new home." At another time it may be, "I am healing my body and my spirit."

Notice that each of these sankalpas is stated in the present tense. That's because a sankalpa is not merely a wish, or even a statement of purpose. It's an articulation of direction that brings your goal into the present moment. What gives a sankalpa its strength is that it assumes that the

outcome you intend to manifest is not just certain but has already occurred.

6 take action, one step at a time

The very heart of the practice of yoga is abhyasa—steady effort in the direction you want to go. So when you are initiating a life change, consider the steps you need to take to make it happen, again using the technique of self-inquiry. Rita, for example, has to consider steppingstones to a different life. She asks herself, "Where will I live? Who will be my friends and support group? How will we help our daughter cope with the changes? What other sources of income do I have besides the studio? How will I pay the studio rent if my husband can't or won't?" Thinking through her options and possibilities helps Rita settle her fears and devise a plan, even though she doesn't have all the answers to her questions yet.

Once you've thought things through, it's crucial to take action. Effective abhyasa, in the yoga of life change, is to take things

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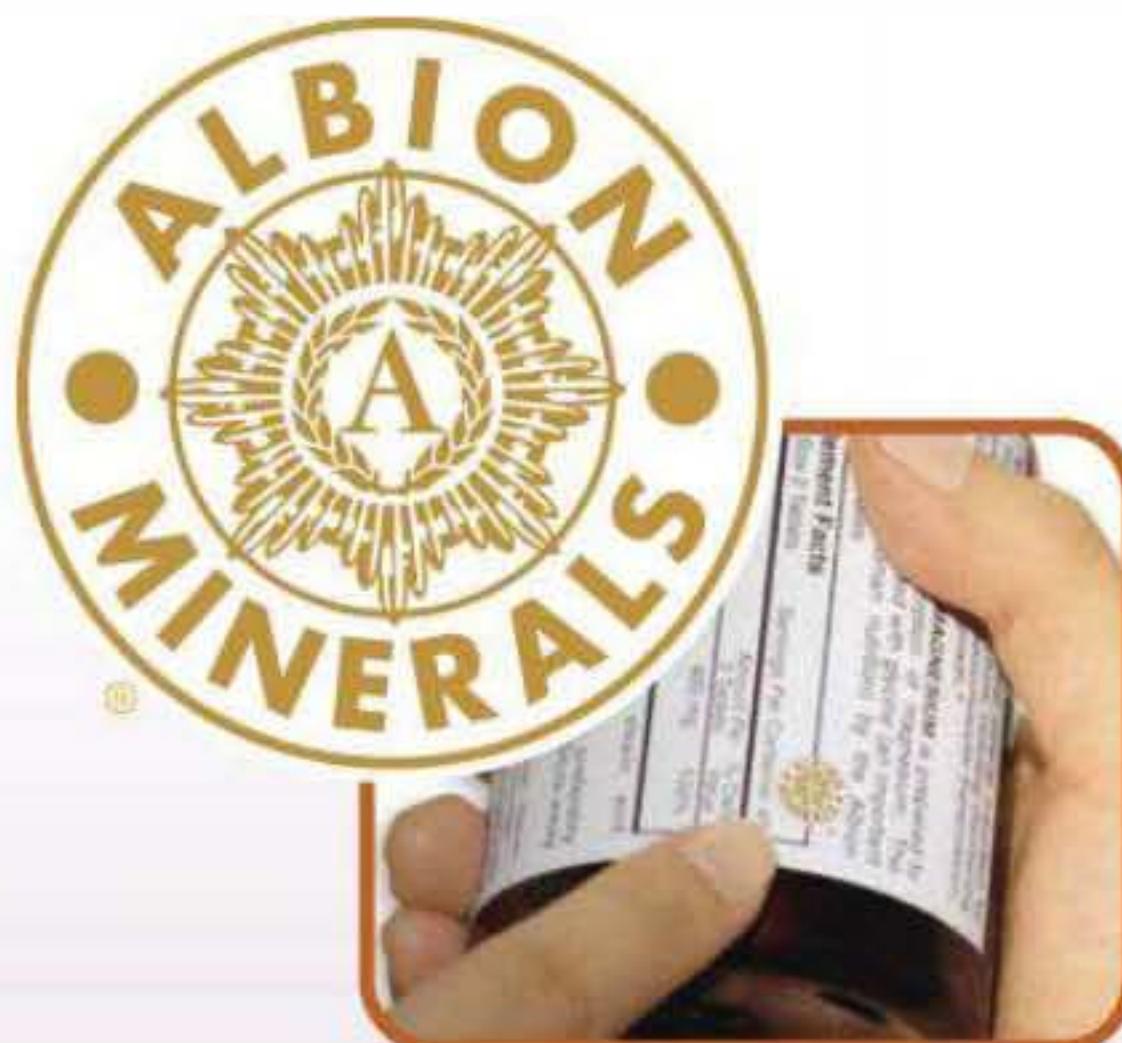


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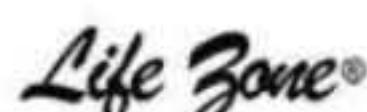
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wisdom

one step at a time so you avoid feeling overwhelmed. Consider Rita's plan for gaining financial independence from her husband, for example. Her first step is to increase her workload with private yoga clients. Her second step is to take a course in conflict resolution, an area in which she has worked in the past. These actions give her the sense of financial stability and the confidence to begin talking to her husband about a divorce. Like Rita, as you take your first small steps, you'll usually find that each step leads to another and that opportunities begin to show up in response.

7 practice letting go

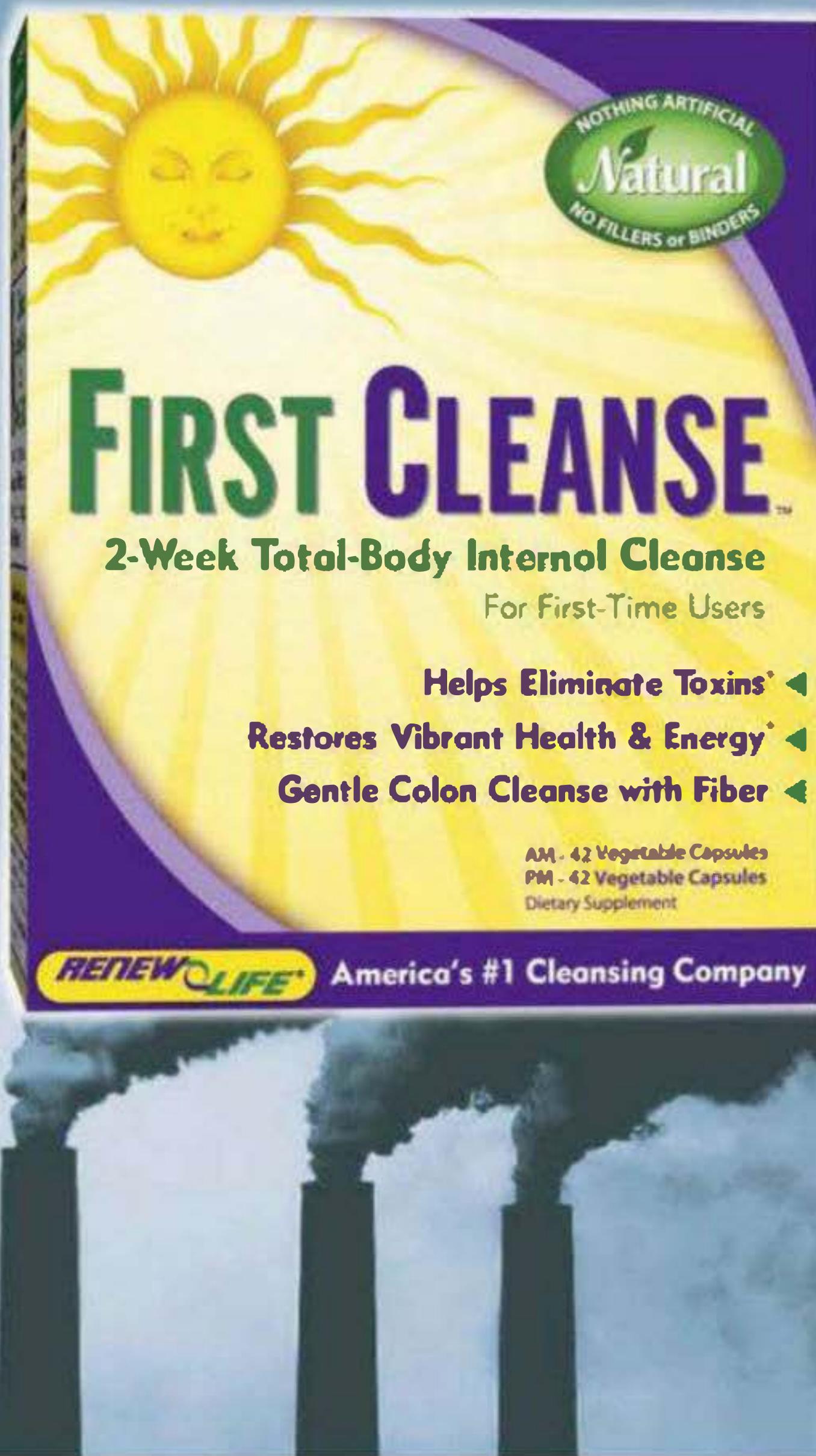
One of the positive byproducts of making a life change, from a yogic perspective, is the opportunity that it gives you to practice vairagya, which is usually translated as "detachment," or letting go. That means letting go of the past; letting go of the way that things used to be; letting go of your fear, your grief, your old relationship, your old job.

But you don't want to let go in a "hard" way, forcing yourself to be a samurai of change. Instead, let yourself grieve the losses or feel the anxiety. Then breathe out and imagine that whatever you're holding on to is flowing out with the breath. Or offer it to the universe with a prayer—something simple like, "I offer this change and everything associated with it. May the results be of benefit to all beings." You do this again and again, until you experience the feeling of freedom that comes with real vairagya.

In my experience, just remembering to let go—moment by moment—can by itself be the inner key to navigating positive and radical change. In fact, if all you learn from your change process is a little bit of letting go, you'll have received one of the great gifts of change—and you'll be one giant leap closer to living the life of your dreams. ♣

Sally Kempton is an internationally recognized teacher of meditation and yoga philosophy and the author of *Meditation for the Love of It*. Her website is sallykempton.com.

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NO WHEAT



NO SOY

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inquire within

Self-reflection is the first step
in breaking patterns and tendencies
that no longer serve you.

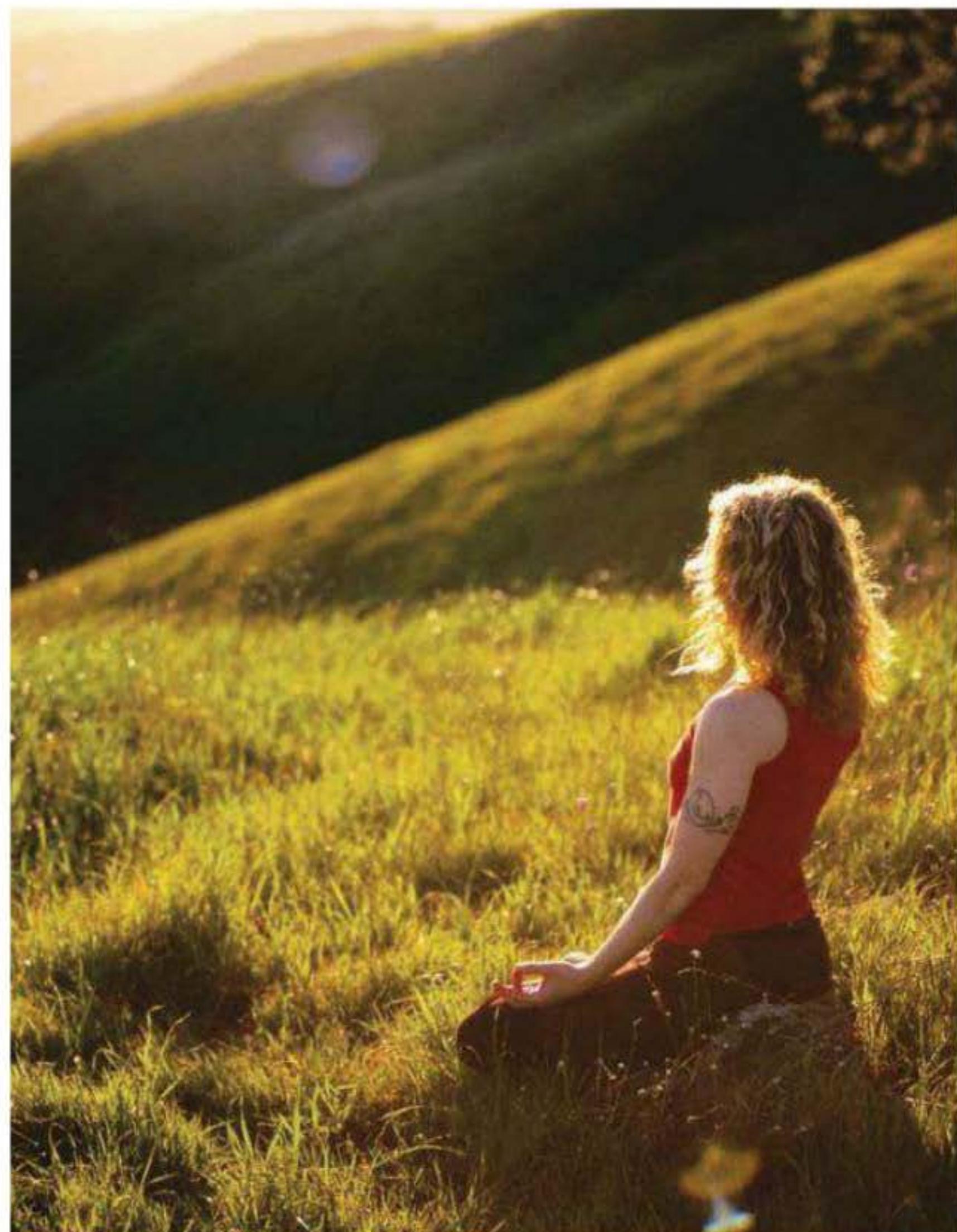
**Samskara saksat
karanat purvajati jnanam**
Through sustained focus and
meditation on our patterns,
habits, and conditioning, we
gain knowledge and under-
standing of our past and of
how we can change the pat-
terns that aren't serving us
to live more freely and fully.

Yoga Sutra III.18

One of my students came to see me recently, feeling frustrated. “I can’t believe I did this to myself,” she said. “I told my boss I could work this weekend to finish a grant proposal, but I also said I’d help with the sixth-grade bake sale at my daughter’s school. Plus, a friend of mine is coming to town, and I told her she could stay with me, and I invited a bunch of our mutual friends over for brunch. So it’s going to be another crazy weekend, and I was really craving some downtime. I just wish I didn’t always overcommit myself like this.”

If you’re like most people, chances are, you’ve had occasion to say to yourself, “Why do I always do that?” Maybe you tend to take on too much, like my student, or to lose your temper, or to start projects but not finish them. At times it can feel like these tendencies are just a part of who you are. But in fact, they aren’t who you are—they’re habits. And though it’s not an easy process, you can change them.

In *Yoga Sutra III.18*, Patanjali explains that your *samskaras*—your habits, patterns, and conditioning—can be a point of focus for **refining the mind** and coming to a place of clearer perception. People often think of *samskaras* in terms of negative patterns, but healthy habits like brushing your teeth or exercising are *samskaras*, too. *Samskaras* generally develop in response to a



situation or circumstance, either slowly over a period of time or suddenly, as the result of a single strong or traumatic event. Growing up in a rough-and-tumble household, for example, you might develop a pattern of defending yourself aggressively, while experiencing a single harrowing event such as an earthquake or a violent crime can leave you with patterns like fearfulness or a mistrust of others.

Implicit in the definition of *samskaras* is that they can have a positive, negative, or neutral effect on you. A habit of getting up early every

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living yoga

morning to meditate will likely have a positive effect, whereas habits like interrupting other people or being late to work are likely to have a negative effect. Whether a habit is positive or negative depends on both the person and the situation—one person's habit of reticence might have a negative effect, creating problems for him because he can't assert himself. But for another person, who volunteers her opinion so freely that no one else gets a chance to talk, reticence would be a positive habit for her to cultivate, with assertiveness being the negative pattern.

Similarly, a habit may serve you well at one point in your life but may need to be reassessed when it's no longer serving you. When you are living in England, for example, you may develop the habit of driving on the left side of the road. This is great as long as you are in England, but when you get back to the United States, continuing to drive on the left side of the road will put you in danger.

The samskaras, or habitual ways of thinking and acting, that Patanjali is concerned with in Yoga Sutra III.18 are the ones that govern your behavior in ways that affect you negatively. These can be so ingrained that you don't realize their full impact (or even see them as patterns) until you start a practice of self-reflection, which serves as a mirror to help you better see the places where you consistently get stuck—so that you can get unstuck and move forward.

LOOK BACK

In the third chapter of the Yoga Sutra, Patanjali explains that samyama, a practice of sustained, intense focus in a specific direction, helps you to refine the mind and achieve greater clarity, thereby reducing your agitation. This sustained focus, he tells us, has another important benefit: You inevitably learn something about the object of your focus. So if you commit to a practice of self-inquiry that focuses on your habits and patterns, you stand to learn something about your past and about how those patterns developed.

Most of the Yoga Sutra is notably unconcerned with the past. Yoga Sutra II.18 is one of the few sutras that mention the

past as a source of insight and information about how to move forward. Patanjali says that if you can become aware of patterns that may be tripping you up, and then reflect on them, you can discover the cause of those patterns and how they may have influenced you over time in a way that maybe keeping you from your goal of greater clarity. This greater understanding of your past (*purvajati jnanam*) allows you to move forward to live more fully in the present—free from the compulsion to keep behaving in ways that cause you suffering and unhappiness.

COME UNSTUCK

The first step toward changing negative habits is a commitment to examining your patterns and habits through a process of self-reflection, or *svadhyaya*. This might naturally develop through an existing asana, breathing, meditation, or chanting practice, or you can develop this as a practice on its own.

Some of the samskaras you'd like to change are probably obvious to you, while others will reveal themselves more subtly. You become aware of some patterns directly in the moment (the remorse you feel after losing your temper, for example, or the regret you have over missing yet another opportunity to assert yourself). You may become aware of other patterns as a result of feedback from others ("You're always late!") or through ongoing reflection ("I could have been a little more compassionate with my neighbor").

It's important to note that Patanjali is not saying that a tendency to be short-tempered, timid, or anything else is a "bad" thing that you must change. Rather, the insight is meant to help support a process of self-discovery and personal transformation where you can actively choose and discern which patterns are no longer serving you and which ones you want to change. As you progress, this ability will benefit you in increasingly subtle but powerful ways, and ultimately it will help you to see—and act more fully from—your true Self.

Once you have become aware of a pattern that you want to change, spend some time reflecting on the qualities you'll need

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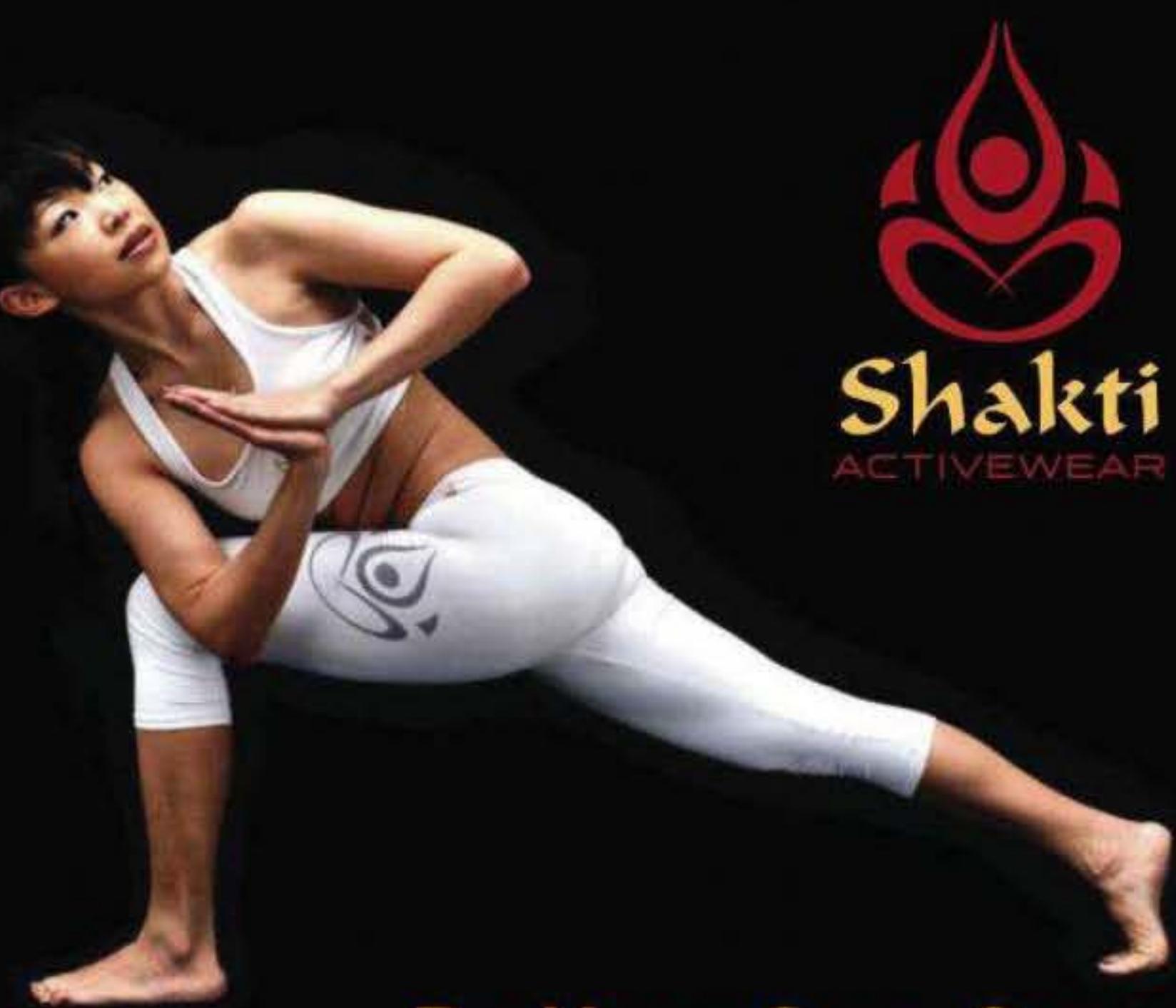
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to cultivate in order to change it: Is it the courage to stand up for yourself or to follow your dreams and write that novel or live overseas? Is it the patience to respond to stressful situations in a less volatile manner? Do you simply need to cultivate more discipline to complete tasks or leave the house on time? The answer to these questions is often complex, of course, and not necessarily easy to put into practice. It helps if you have a teacher, mentor, or even a trusted friend to help support you through the process.

ASSESS WITH PATIENCE

The next step is to set realistic goals for yourself and let go of self-judgment. While awareness and intention can be incredibly powerful, shifting a pattern can be a long and difficult process. It helps to incorporate a formal check-in at the end of each day. After whatever practice you may be doing, or simply as you breathe comfortably and consciously before sleep, take a moment to appreciate your efforts in creating small (or big) changes and acknowledge, without judgment, those areas that still need improvement. If you can, give yourself an action to support your intention: “Tomorrow morning I will call my neighbor and apologize for being impatient with her yesterday” or “I will make an appointment with my boss to discuss my desire to take on more responsibility.”

Remember that you have the choice and the ability to create positive change in your life—you are not doomed to stay stuck in patterns that are not serving you. And don’t confuse yourself with your negative samskara. The behavior you wish to change is simply a pattern, and however ingrained or strong it is, it is not who you really are at your core.

Recognizing these pieces is yoga, differentiating the Self from the other and living consciously in the present moment. This practice gives you the opportunity to more fully realize the person you truly are and want to be in the world.

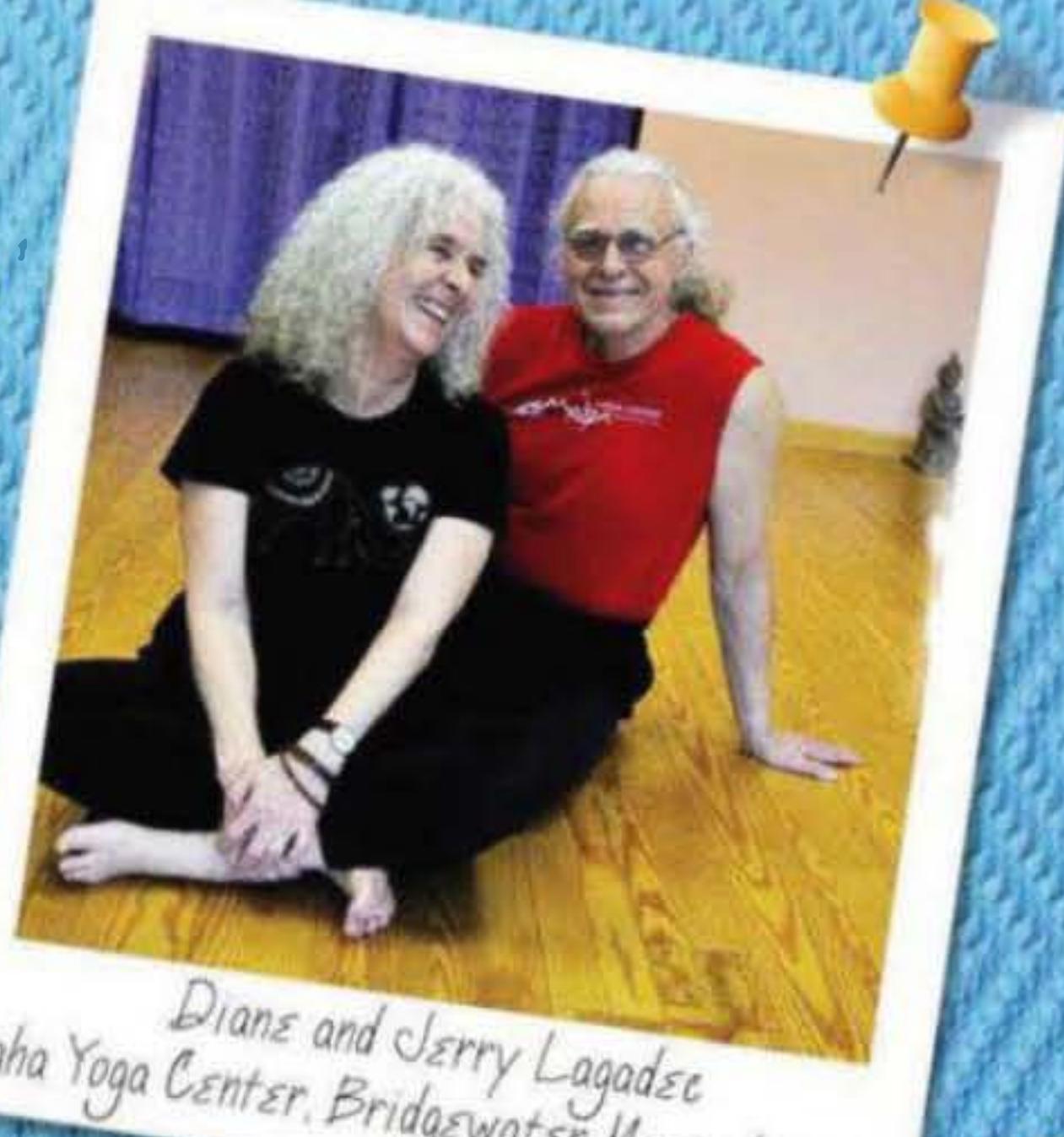
Kate Holcombe is the founder and president of the nonprofit Healing Yoga Foundation in San Francisco (healingyoga.org).

ACCESSORIZE *kulae*

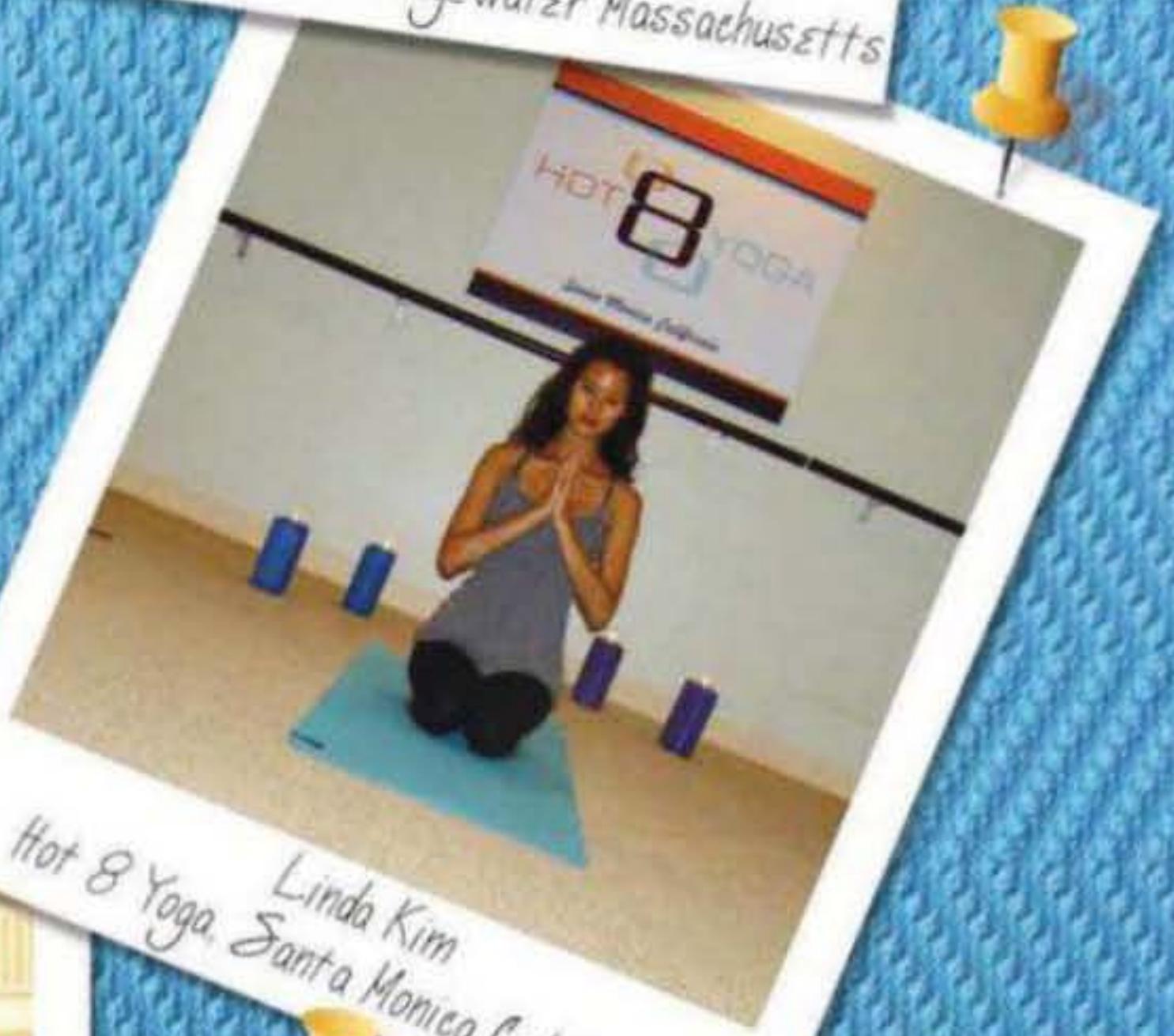


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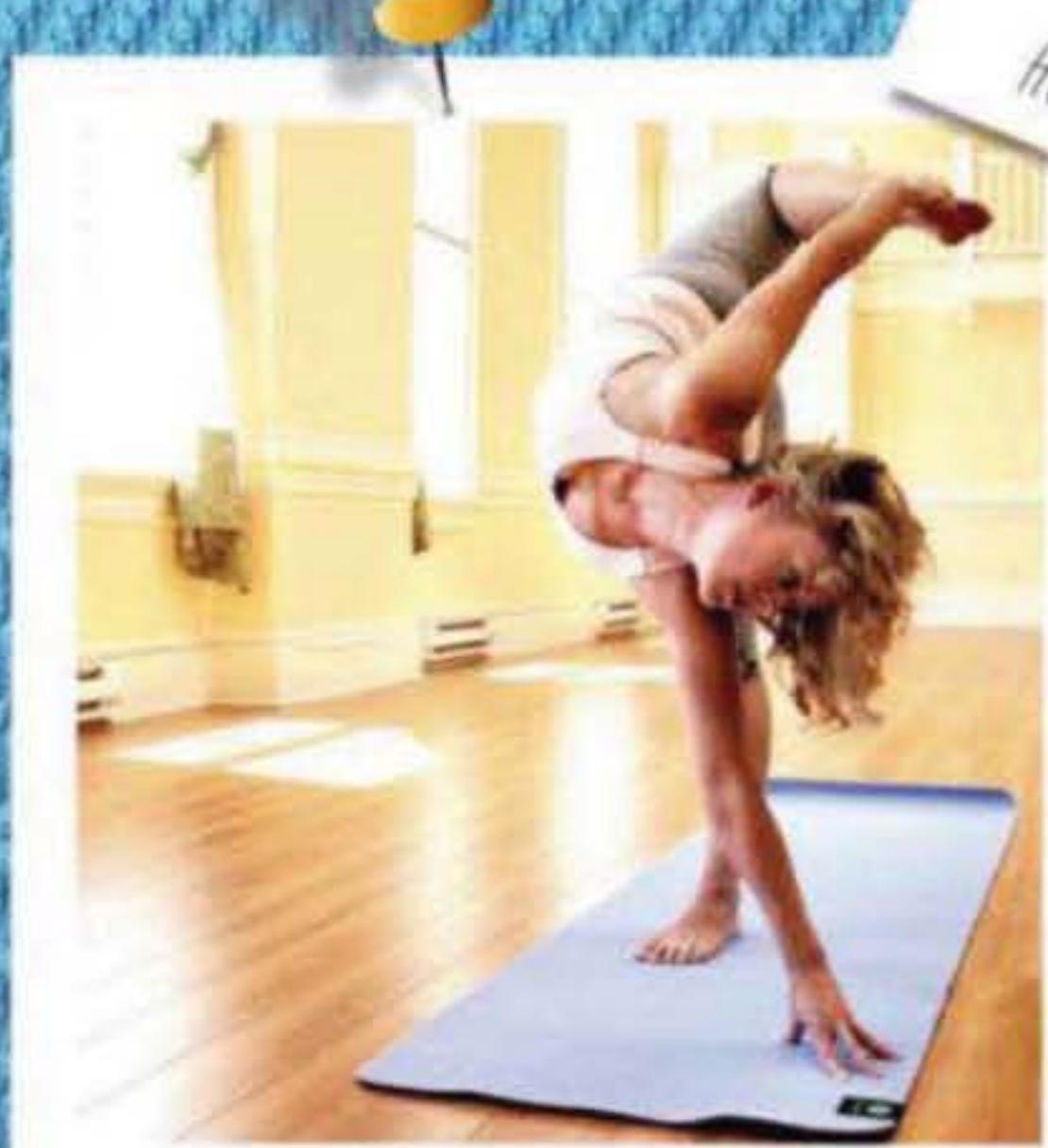
Mine Taylan
Bikram Yoga Malmo, Sweden



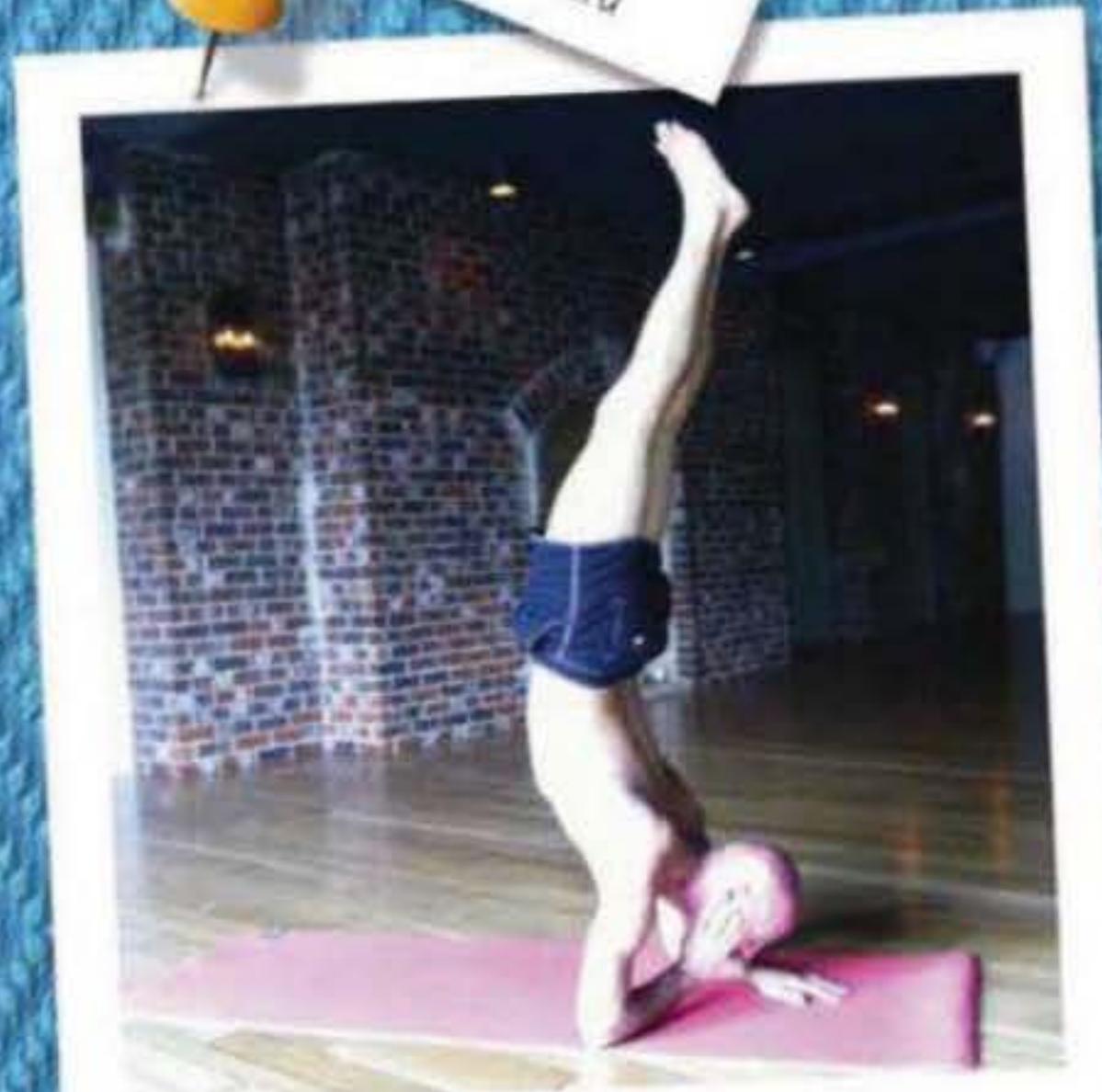
Diane and Jerry Lagadec
Maha Yoga Center, Bridgewater Massachusetts



Hot 8 Yoga, Santa Monica California



Shayna Broadwell
Core Essence Yoga, Milwaukee Wisconsin



Jonny Kest
Center for Yoga, Michigan



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basics

revolved head-of-the-knee pose

Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana

parivrtta = revolved
janu = head; sirsa = knee
asana = pose

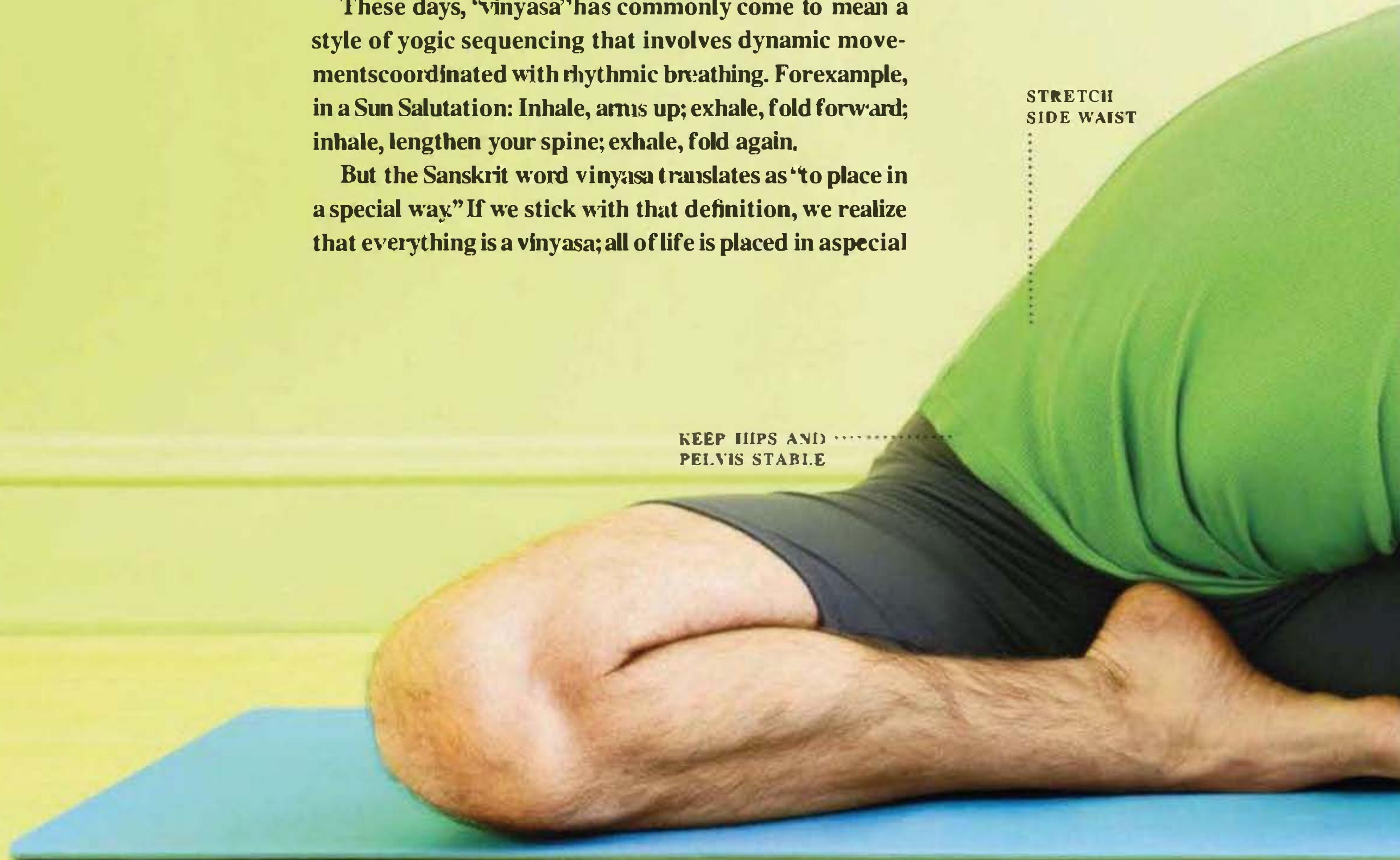
When I tell people I teach vinyasayoga, I'm surprised at how many of them assume that means a superintense form of yoga that can't be done by beginners or seniors or anyone else not up for a butt-kicking workout. But in fact, when done with awareness, even a quiet seated pose like Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana (Revolved Head-of-the-Knee Pose), which is a deep side stretch and happens to be a great pose for relieving back pain, can be a true experience of vinyasa.

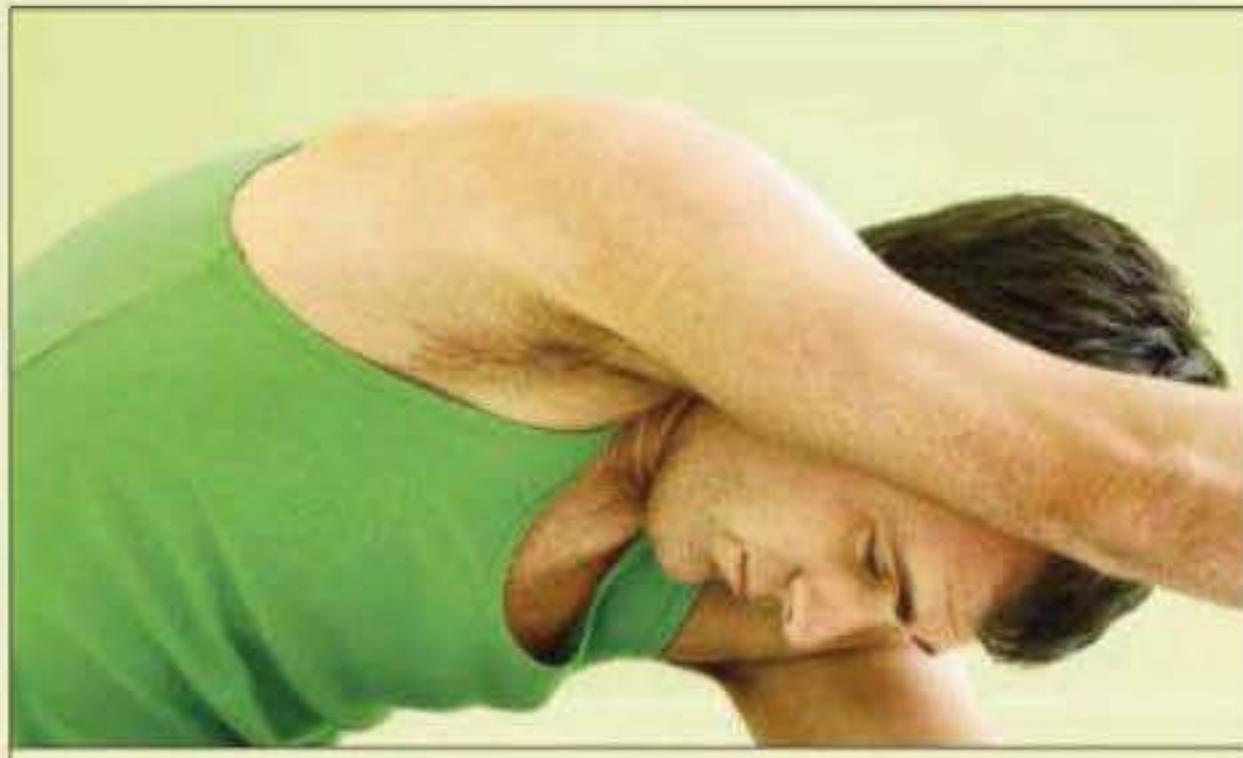
These days, "vinyasa" has commonly come to mean a style of yogic sequencing that involves dynamic movements coordinated with rhythmic breathing. For example, in a Sun Salutation: Inhale, arms up; exhale, fold forward; inhale, lengthen your spine; exhale, fold again.

But the Sanskrit word vinyasa translates as "to place in a special way." If we stick with that definition, we realize that everything is a vinyasa; all of life is placed in a special

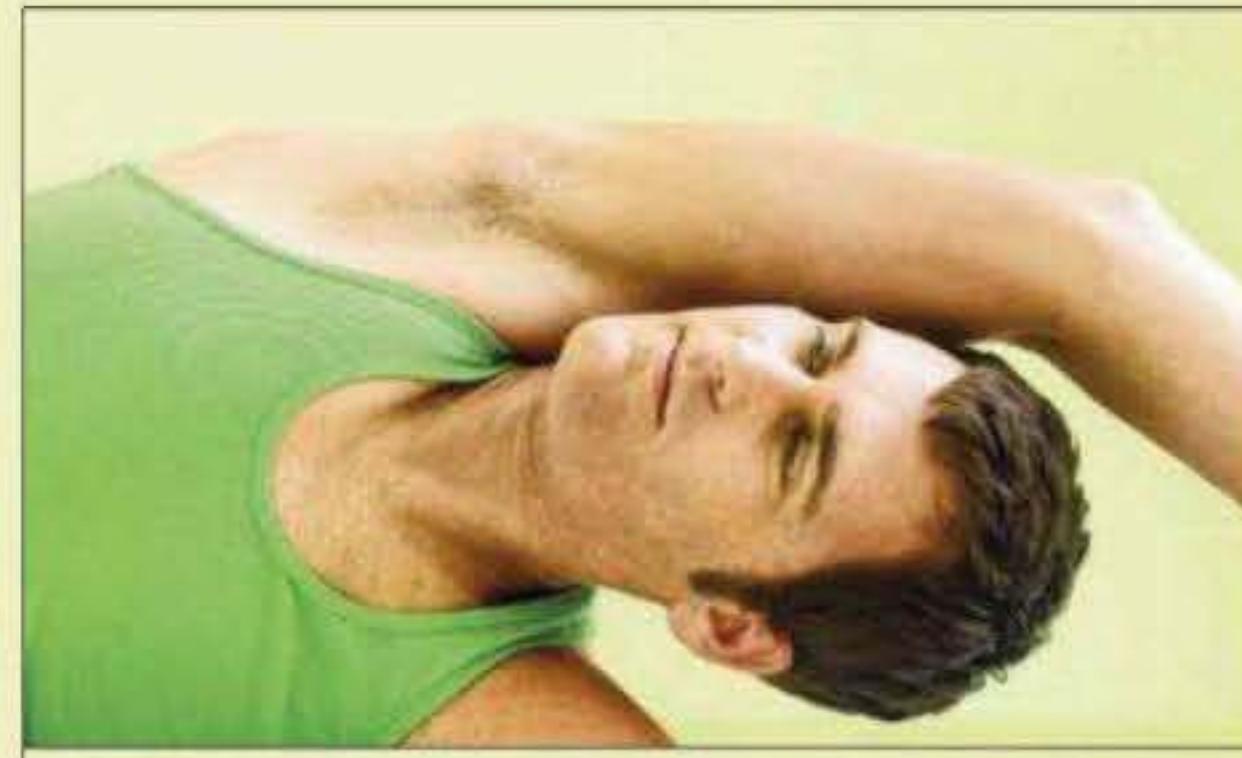
STRETCH
SIDE WAIST

KEEP HIPS AND PELVIS STABLE



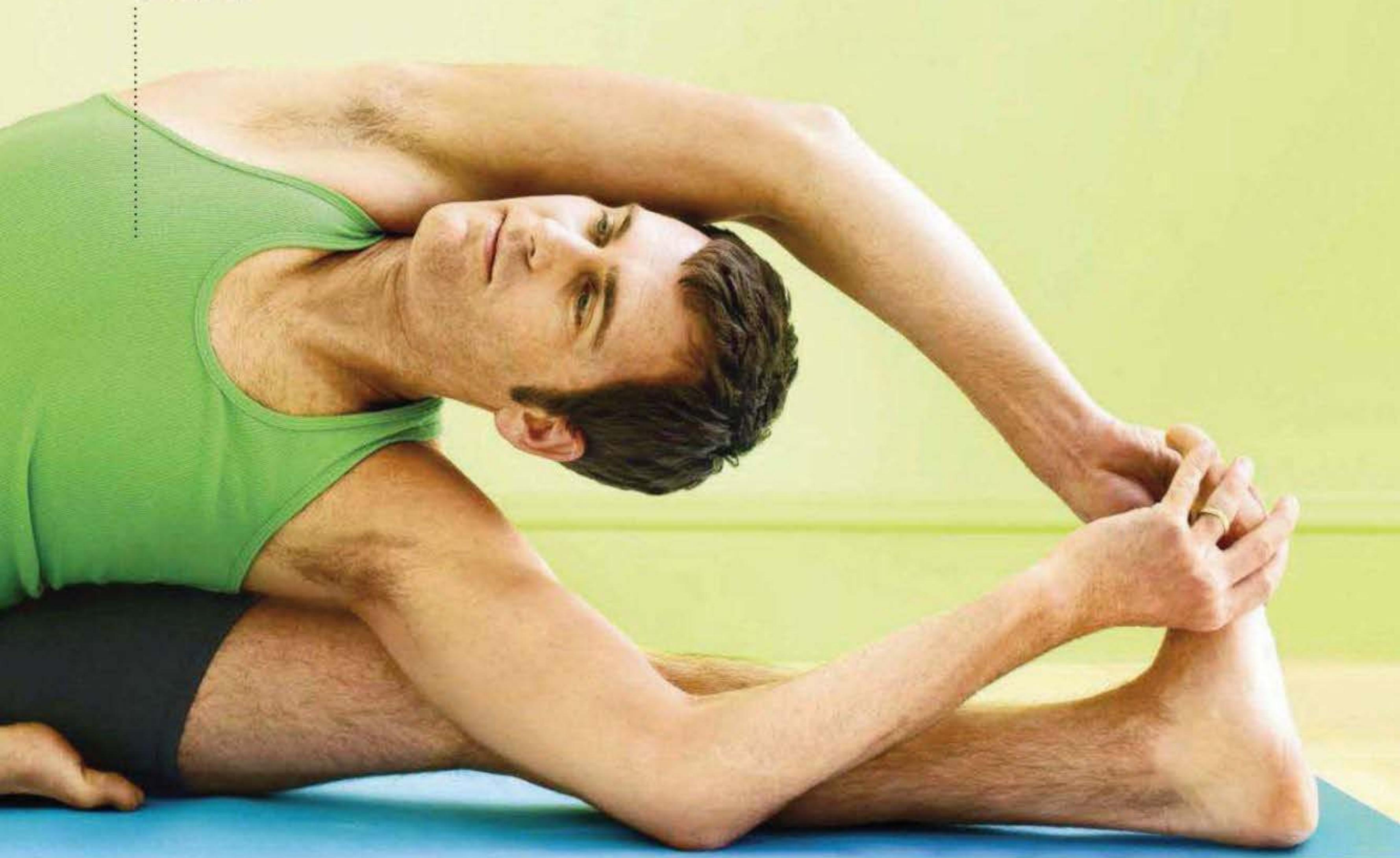


DON'T let the chest roll toward the floor.



DO open the chest.

EXPAND CHEST



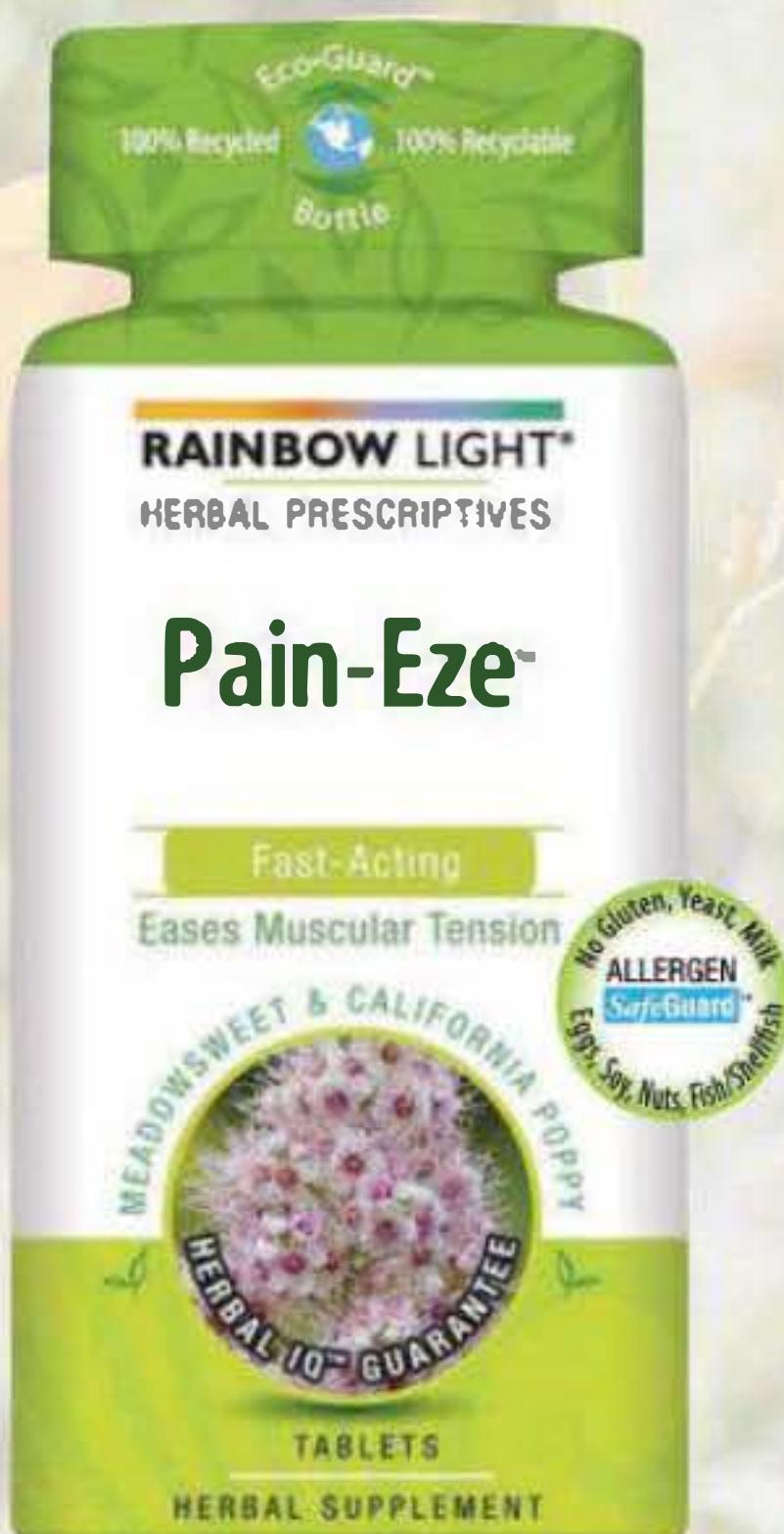
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basics

way. Every day dawns, peaks at noon, and fades into dusk and becomes night. Each aspect of life flows into the next. Every breath we take is a vinyasa. When we follow our natural, unmanipulated breathing pattern, there is an organic drawing in of oxygen, a slight gap in activity, then a letting go of breath that feeds back into the ocean of air around us.

Like our breath, any vinyasa sequence, or any pose, can be thought of as having three essential parts: arising, abiding, and dissolving. Each part of the process is equally important, and together they make up the full experience of the pose.

In Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana, there are three main actions: Inhale as you lift tall out of your seat; exhale as you bend to the side; and inhale as you lift back up to a vertical spine. Moving through these three actions with awareness is vinyasa just as much as a vigorous Sun Salutation.

Many smaller, subtle actions also make up the pose, and these too are part of the vinyasa. Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana is complex. It's a seated pose, a hip opener, a sidebend, a twist, and a shoulder opener all at once. It offers the experience of working with a challenge—sidebending while twisting—from a seated base that is comfortable and easy for most people to access. The twist rejuvenates the spine, and the intense side stretch of all the muscles of the rib cage can enhance breathing capacity. It is a good counterpose for people who sit in chairs all day because it opens tight hips, can unlock the lower back and side waist, and can help relieve low-back pain.

When you coordinate all parts of the pose within the three-step framework of vinyasa, you can experience a sense of aliveness while staying grounded in a seated, stable position.

SEATED VINYASA

Let's begin by sitting in Dandasana (Staff Pose). All standing poses are built on Tadasana (Mountain Pose), and all seated poses are built on Dandasana, the seated version of Tadasana. Dandasana alignment requires strong legs. Start by pressing out through the heels until your feet feel energized and alive. Keep the sitting

pose benefits

Relieves low-back pain

Stretches the spine,
hips, and hamstrings

Expands the rib cage,
improving breathing capacity

Improves digestion

Relieves headache and neck pain

contraindications

Pulled hamstring

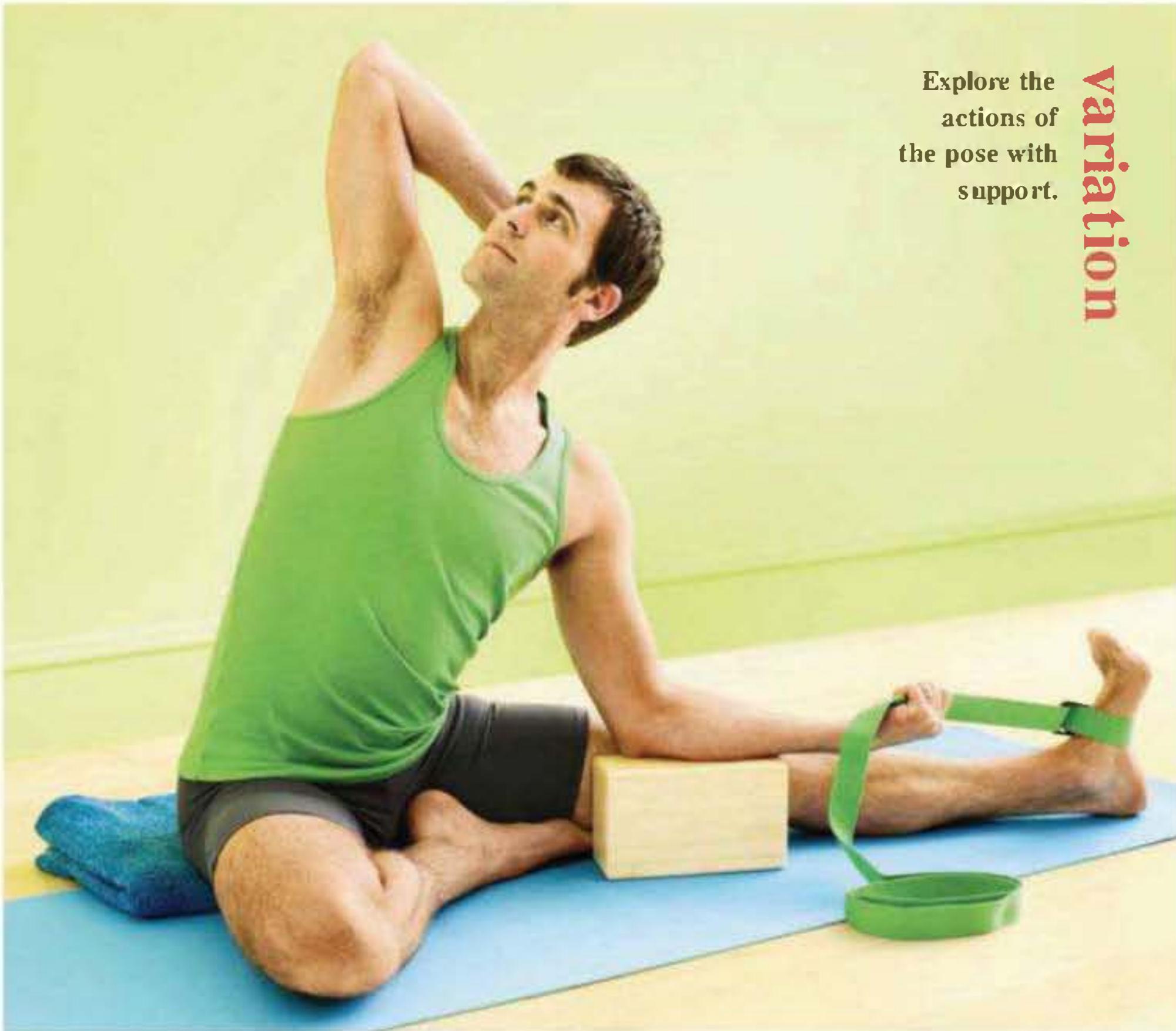
Herniated disk

bones firmly planted to support an uplifted spine. Like standing poses, seated poses require a strongly grounded lower body from which the torso can lift.

Now you're ready to move into the next phase of your seated vinyasa. Place your index fingers inside your knee creases. Inhale as you lift your inner knees up, and then exhale as you open them out into a loose Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose). On your next inhalation, open your legs into a wide straddle, taking Upavistha Konasana (Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend), and then exhale fully as you complete the movement.

Press down into your sitting bones to lift up your spine, sitting as tall as you can in this position. Reach strongly out through your heels and check in with your legs. Make sure your knees and toes are facing directly upright, rolling neither inward nor outward.

Now, fold in your right leg, pressing the heel into the groin. Keep your left leg extended. Inhale, again sitting tall, and, as you exhale, twist your torso to the right. The twist will come from your waist and get its leverage from your grounded, stable pelvis and legs. As you inhale, reach your left arm out to the left, at shoulder height, inner elbow facing the ceiling. As you exhale, bend your torso to the left, keeping your chest facing forward rather



Explore the actions of the pose with support.

than rolling toward the floor (see Do and Don't photos on page 61). Place your left forearm on the floor to the inside of your left leg, and take hold of your left foot. If your arm doesn't come to the floor; that's OK. In the next section, you will learn how to support your practice with props.

Next, inhale and extend your right arm straight up toward the ceiling. On the next exhalation, turn the inner arm and elbow to face your ear, and take the arm overhead toward the left, reaching toward your left toes. Maybe you will touch your left foot today, and maybe you will touch it next year. But instead of letting your mind go into the future, can you stay present and notice the experience of abiding in the pose right now? You may be feeling deep stretching through your side waist and hip, which can help unlock tightness and pain in your back.

You may find that you can go deeper into your experience of the pose if you remember to practice vinyasa: On each in-breath, you can lengthen your spine and reengage your legs and arms. On each

out-breath, you might twist just a tiny bit more and fold a tad further to the side.

As you reach your right hand toward your left foot, note whether your chest feels expansive. If it does, you can use your arms to deepen the twist. Inhale and lengthen the spine; exhale and bend your elbows away from each other. This arm-bending action will create some give for your spine to twist further and for your chest to turn toward the ceiling. If you feel your chest closing in on itself, work with the prop instructions in the next section. If you are comfortable, stay here for several more deep breaths. Concentrate on breathing into the side ribs and chest.

Coming out of the pose is the third part of the vinyasa. Exhale and press down with your thighs and sitting bones. From this earthward movement, let your next inhalation lift you back upright.

Sit quietly for a moment and observe the effects of your practices so far. Did you notice that as you exited Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana, the pose dissolved and you entered a new position? Take a moment

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basics

to experience that fully. Then repeat the whole thing to the other side, trying to stay engaged in the process as it unfolds—arising, abiding, and dissolving. This is truly vinyasa practice: being present with change and embodying impermanence.

FIND SUPPORT

You've probably noticed that this bigside-bend can sometimes be a real...stretch! If your body isn't ready to go over that far, you may be betterable to experience this pose with the snpport of props (see photo on page 63).

For one thing, you may have discovered while working on Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana that you don't feel very uplifted when sitting on the floor with your legs in a straddle. Your pelvis may be tucking under, which tends to send your sacrum backward and to require a lot of back and lower abdominal effort. To remedy this, try sitting up on a cushion, folded blanket, or yoga block. Place it just mideryoursitting bones, allowing the pelvis to slightly tilt forward. Use enough padding and support so that you have a perched feeling that is comfortable and effortless. If your knees are high off the ground, you can place a rolled-up blanket under them to prevent straining the backs of the knees.

If your forearm did not touch the floor on the inside of your leg when you bent to one side, no problem! Place your trusty yoga block along the inside of your thigh so it becomes the perfect shelf for your forearm. This helps support the expansion of the chest, so that you can keep bending to the side without rolling the chest toward the floor. The top side of the ribs should feel expansive, inviting the breath to fill the lungs. If you can't feel any movement in the bottom ribs as you breathe, the block will help to create more space there.

Whetheryourarm is on a block or on the floor, you might not be able to reach your foot. If that's the case, wrap a yoga strap around your foot and hold on to it with your bottom hand as you lean to the side. This will give you some leverage to deepen yoursidbend with every exhalation, and eventually you might crawl your fingers up the belt closer to yourfeet. For

now, explore the little movements that can happen with each inhalation and exhalation; think of each breath cycle as a tiny vinyasa.

Finally, you might find your chest rolling toward the floor as though it wants to come into a forward bend. To avoid that, bend your top arm and place your hand behind yourhead. This will help you tuck your shoulder blades into your back and open the chest. From here, you can turn your face to look up toward your elbow, creating a delicious twisting and opening.

To come out of this supported variation, begin bygrounding into the legs with an exhalation. On an inhalation, reach your top arm up toward the ceiling, let go of the belt, and come upright—dissolving Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana as a tall seated Upavistha Konasana arises. Now try the supported version on the otherside.

DAILY VINYASA

You are starting to get the idea that anything and everything can be considered a vinyasa, even something as simple as getting up to go to the kitchen for a cold drink. Of course, if you're like me, sometimes you find yourself getting np off the couch, walking to the refrigerator, wonderingwhyyou went there, and going back to the couch. Does that sound familiar? We all zone out like that sometimes. But youdon't have to do everyday tasks like a zombie. All the small experiences of your day can become a yoga vinyasa when you bring awareness to them. You can begin to consciously experience your actions as part of the natural process of life, of the organic sequencing of all things, of which we are a part.

Perhaps you can understand vinyasa as a way of purposefully moving through space, seeing that every action has a result, that everything is interdependent and everything matters. So here's your homework: Think of three vinyasas that you do every day without noticing. Can you engage with those moments “in a special way”? Why not try it here and now, in the middle of your one precious life?

Cynid Lee is an author, artist, and yoga teacher, and the founder of OM Yoga Center.

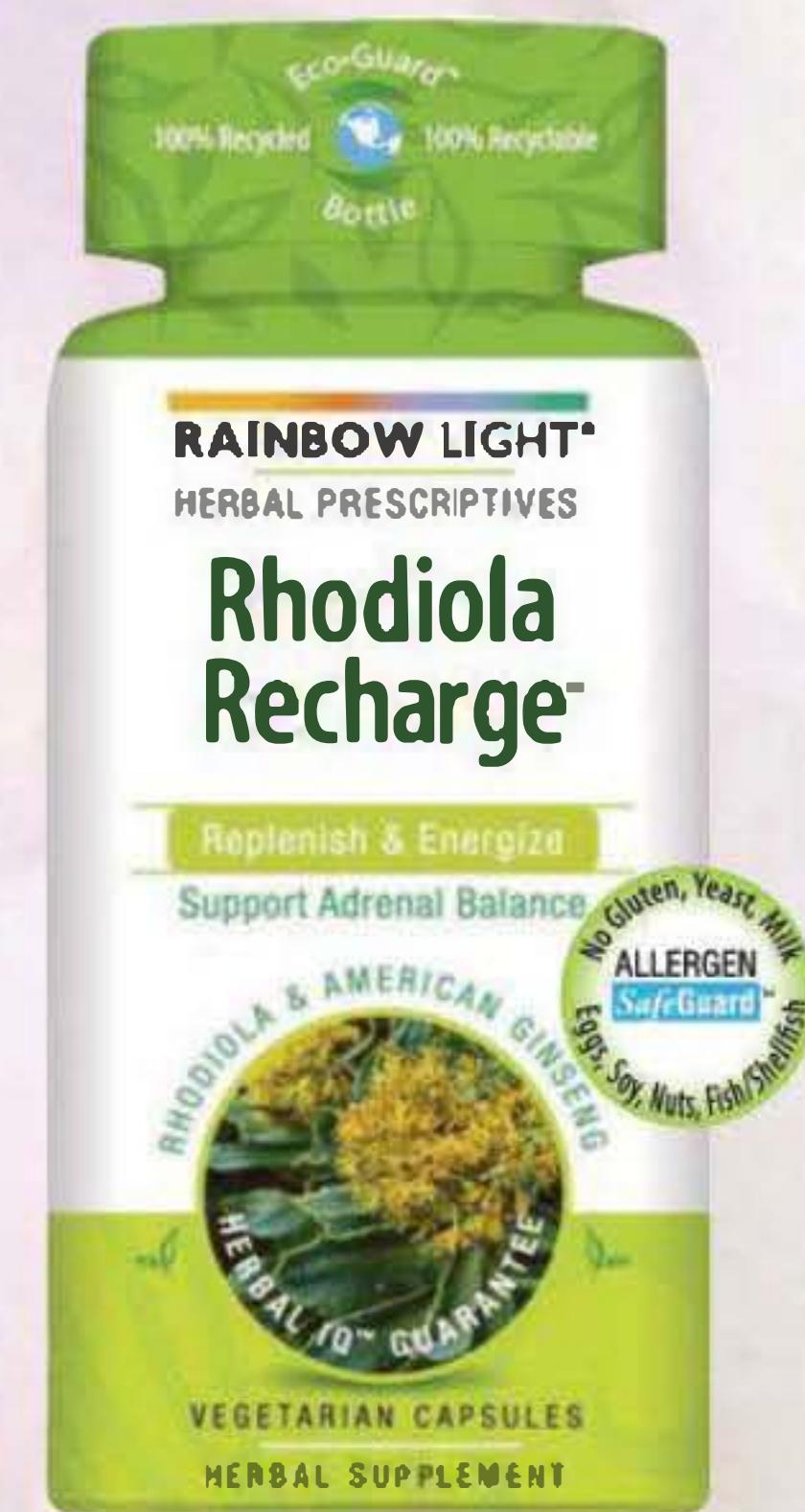
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steady as she goes

Be ready for life's inevitable storms by cultivating balance and stability.

to begin

Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes. As you sit, encourage a strong sense of physical and emotional equanimity to prepare for your practice.

to finish

Take Balasana (Child's Pose) for several breaths and then rest in Savasana (Corpse Pose) for 5 minutes. Release into the feeling of integration and equanimity that you've cultivated through your practice.



Whether you're new to yoga or have been practicing for years, life offers plenty of circumstances that can throw you off course. Shannon Paige Schneider, the founder of Om Time yoga center in Boulder, Colorado, and a cancer survivor, knows how challenging it is to stay steady and balanced during tough times.

At first glance, her go-to sequence for training yourself to handle life's difficult moments may seem surprising. It's not a soothing set of restorative poses nor a meditation—it's a fun and lively series

of asymmetrical poses that teach you to find your center and balance. These poses offer an incredible opportunity to **practice steadiness** in precarious situations, says the Prana Flow teacher.

If you can maintain presence in shapes that make you teeter-totter, you can observe where you overextend and where you hold back. You can learn to identify where you are weak and in need of strength or where you are rigid and in need of release. Then, by drawing your energy more evenly toward the midline

of your body, you'll establish a steady center in spite of the asymmetry. When you learn to work skillfully to bring a wobbly pose into balance, you can call on those same skills during difficult or unsteady times in your life.

Eventually, you may learn to be at ease—and even find joy—in moments when you don't have two feet planted firmly on the ground. "Most of your life is going to be spent in asymmetry," says Schneider: "You need to learn to enjoy the wobble." KAREN MACKLIN

home practice || with Shannon Paige Schneider

1 Standing Sidebend

Stand with your feet sitting bone-distance apart. Lift your arms overhead and hold your right wrist with your left index finger and thumb, right palm facing left. Root down evenly through the soles of your feet and lean to the left. Draw the right lower ribs back and in to keep them in line with the left lower ribs. Stay for 1 full breath. Lift up to center; switch hands, and lean to the opposite side. Repeat 3 times.

2 Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)

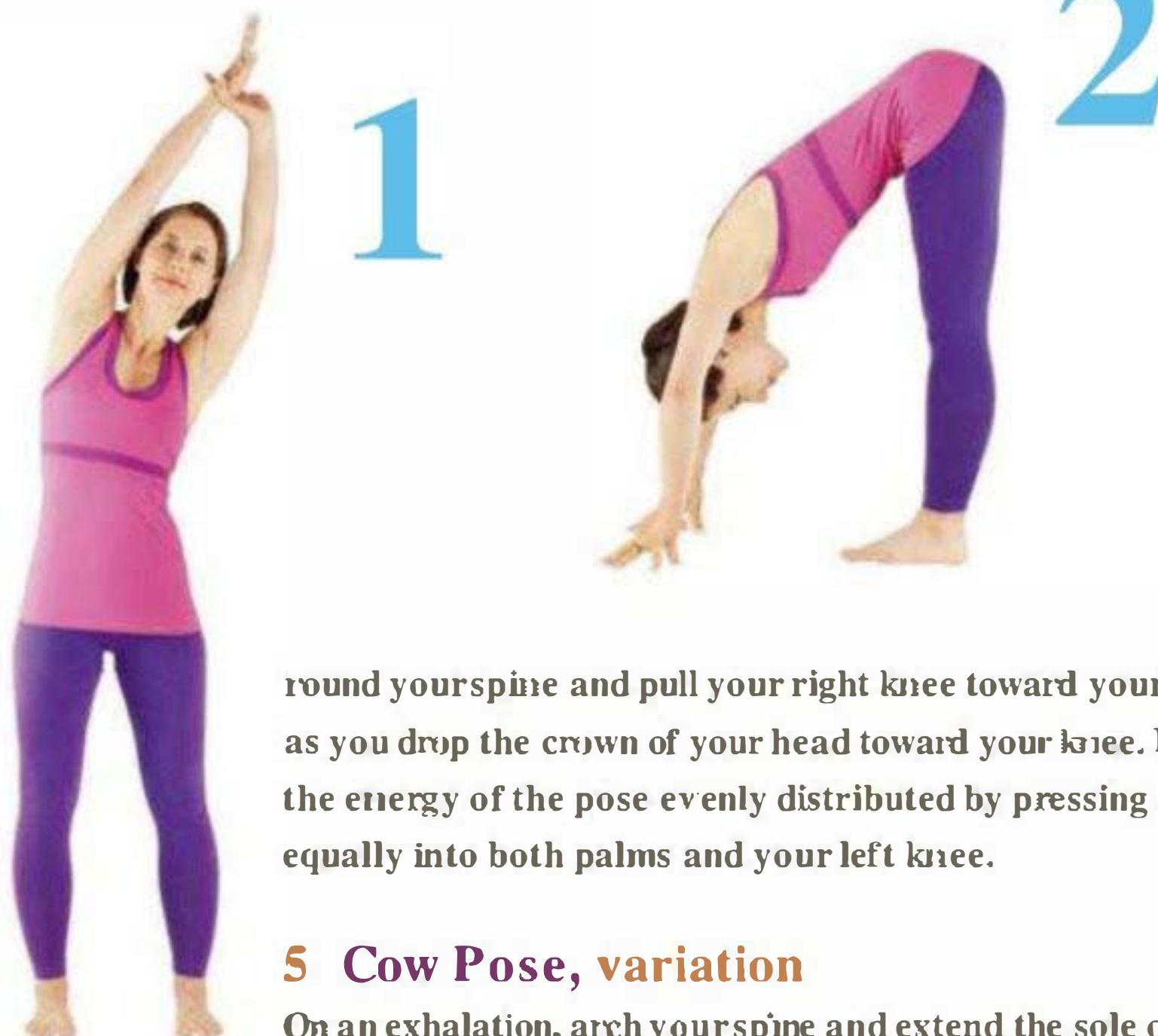
From standing, bow forward over your legs and place your hands or fingertips on the floor. If your fingers don't reach the floor, bend your knees. Lift your toes, spread them wide, and place them down again. Ground down equally through the inner and outer edges of your feet, and through your toes and heels, creating a strong connection between your feet and the earth. Stay for 5 breaths as you inhale to lengthen the spine and exhale to deepen the bow.

3 Utkatasana (Chair Pose)

Root evenly into your feet, bend your knees, and lower your hips to sit back into a chair position. Lift your belly and torso away from your thighs and clasp your hands behind your lower back. To prevent the low back from curving in too deeply, draw your lower floating ribs in. Then bend your elbows slightly, squeeze your forearms toward each other, and stretch your arms away from your seat. After 5 breaths, fold forward and release your hands to the floor.

4 Cat Pose, variation

Come onto hands and knees with your shoulders over your wrists and your hips over your knees. On an inhalation,



1



2

round your spine and pull your right knee toward your navel as you drop the crown of your head toward your knee. Keep the energy of the pose evenly distributed by pressing down equally into both palms and your left knee.

5 Cow Pose, variation

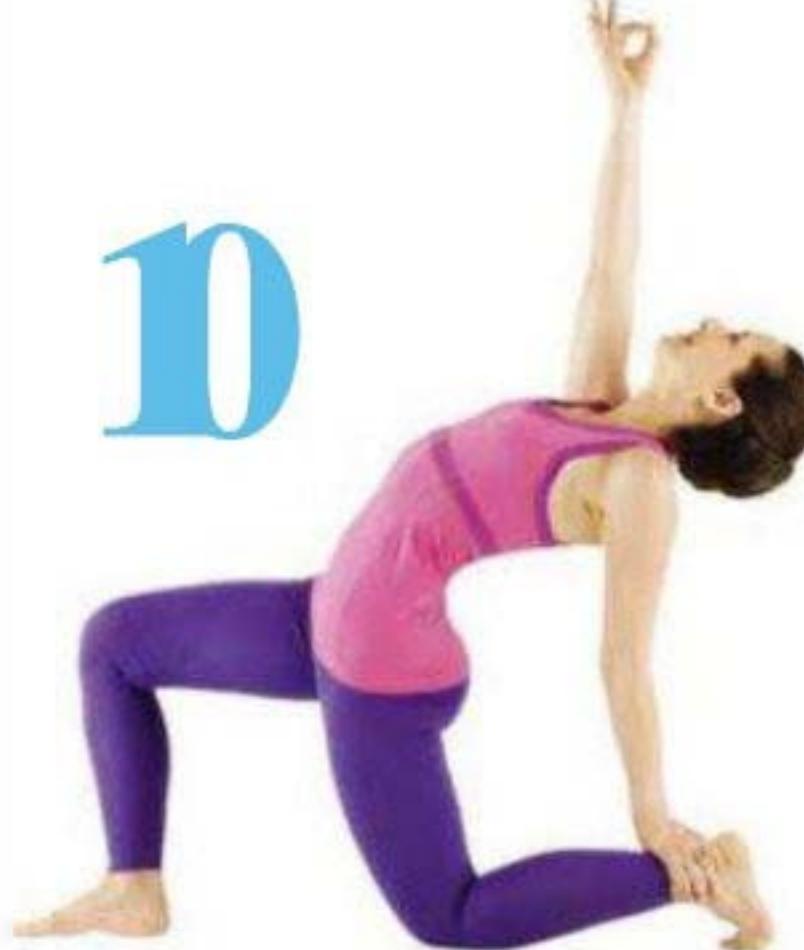
On an exhalation, arch your spine and extend the sole of the right foot skyward, keeping your right knee bent. Lengthen the back of the neck and look forward. As you lift the right foot higher, draw the lower ribs in on the right side to keep from overarching and compressing the low back. Repeat poses 4 and 5, pulsing back and forth with your breath 5 times with your right leg, and then switch sides.

6 Eka Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana (One-Legged Downward-Facing Dog Pose)

Roll your toes under and lift your knees, pressing back into Downward-Facing Dog. Step your feet together. Lift your right leg up and back behind you. Point your right pinky toe down toward the earth to keep the hips parallel. Activate your left and right legs equally while strongly engaging the arms to keep balance in the pose. Move your lower ribs in to prevent your low back from overarching. Stay for 5 breaths, release your right leg down, and take the left side.

7 High Lunge

From Downward Dog, step your right foot forward. With your right knee over the right ankle, press back through the heel of the left foot. On an inhalation, lift your torso and arms up. To create steadiness in the asymmetry, pull the right hip crease back, squeeze your inner thighs toward each other, and lift up out of the lower back. Keep the back of your neck long. Stay for 5 breaths. Then release, step back to Down Dog, and repeat on the other side.



6



7

A video of this Home Practice sequence can be found online at yogajournal.com/livemag.



8 Anahatasana (Heart Chakra Pose)

From Down Dog, release your knees to the floor. Keep your hips over your knees and walk your hands forward until your arms are straight. Press through the palms of the hands, roll the forearms toward each other, and roll your upper arms away from your ears. Allow your heart to sink toward the earth. Take 5 breaths here as you inhale to lift up a bit out of the pose and exhale to sink deeper; pulsing slightly with the breath.

9 Ardha Bhekasana (Half Frog Pose)

Slide forward onto your belly and prop yourself up on your forearms. Bend your left knee and take hold of your left foot with your left hand, pressing the heel down toward the left hip. Draw your inner thighs toward each other, and press down through your right pinky toe. Move your right ribs in and press your left side body forward. Take 5 breaths, repeat on the right side, then press back to Down Dog.

10 Ustrasana (Camel Pose), variation

Step your right foot forward, stacking the right knee over your right ankle. Take your left knee to the floor; keeping your left toes curled under. With your arms by your sides, lift your upper back. To create balance and equilibrium in the pose, tone the inner thighs toward each other and pull the right hip back to parallel with the left. Hold your left heel with your left hand, and lift your right arm skyward, moving your right lower ribs back. Stay steady and strong for 5 breaths; then lift up and repeat on the second side.





season of change

Fall is a natural time of transition
and an ideal moment for a
GENTLE DETOX PROGRAM
that will reset your body and mind, and
prime your system for a winter of wellness.

~by Hillari Dowdle~

After the long, hot, action-packed days of summer, the first blush of autumn can feel like a welcome relief—a chance to slow down and relax. But for many people, the sensation is fleeting. For although the weather prompts pause, the back-to-school (or back-to-work) rush demands even more busyness. It's easy to get caught up in the whirl of activity, only to find yourself feeling depleted and sick when winter comes.

You can set yourself up for an autumn of ease—and a winter of wellness—by taking time out now

—photos by Chris Andre



join our fall detox

to do a simple seven-day Ayurvedic detox. It's a safe, effective alternative to extreme detox programs—and you can do it in the comfort of your own home. "The transition months of September and October are the perfect time to reset your mind and body with a cleanse," says Scott Blossom, a San Francisco Bay Area Ayurvedic consultant and yoga therapist who designed the following gentle, balancing cleanse for *Yoga Journal*. "At the junction between the heat of summer and the cold of winter, you have a real opportunity to let go of bad habits and embrace healthier ones."

Everyone should consider cleansing in the fall, says Blossom, including yogis. From an Ayurvedic perspective, not only will it facilitate the removal of toxins from your body and strengthen your immunity before winter comes, but it will also offer an opportunity to deepen your practice, clear your head, and tune in to what's most important to you. It's a rare chance, offered by the cycle of nature itself, for a do-over:

autumn's alchemy Detoxing in the fall may sound counterintuitive. After all, spring—Ayurveda's other optimal time to detox—is our cultural cleaning season, whereas autumn feels like a time to hunker down and get back to work. "In the spring, it's about shaking off the weight of winter and getting revved up for summer, and we're good at that," Blossom says. "In the fall, it's about acknowledging that we're overly busy, slowing down, and restoring the body."

The view in Ayurveda, yoga's sister science of medicine, is that all of nature—including us—is bound by the relationships among the three doshas, or primal energies. Vata dosha is associated with the elements air and ether; it governs creativity and change, and tends to wax and wane. Governed by fire and water, pitta dosha is the energy of transformation, achievement, and metabolism. Kapha dosha is associated with earth and water; it suggests groundedness, stability, and growth.

Each of us contains a unique mix of the three doshas, although we tend to be dominated by one at any given time. The seasons are also governed by doshic activity. According to Ayurvedic theory, by the time autumn rolls around, we have accumulated plenty of heat in our tissues from the summer—that's fiery pittadosha. As the leaves dry up and the wind begins to blow, vata dosha

Go to yogajournal.com/falldetox to sign up for the seven-day program and be guided into optimal health. Our plan, designed by Ayurveda practitioner and Shadow Yoga teacher Scott Blossom, enables you to determine your Ayurvedic constitution and tailor-make the cleanse to best suit you.



begins to take over—the one governed by air and marked by change, instability, and anxiety. Metaphorically speaking, what happens when you add random blasts of air to a fire? It burns even brighter. Blossom says that when the accumulated heat of pitta is fanned by vata, it can lead to mental and physical burnout, stressing our adrenals and nervous system and putting some of the body's natural detoxification processes on hold.

Consider the liver, for example. It is the body's natural detoxifier and one of the primary organs in



The program provides easy-to-use tools to help support your cleanse.

DIET Take the dosha quiz and get Ayurvedic cleansing recipes for warming kitchari, spicy herbal teas, and tangy chutneys tailored to your dominant dosha.

HERBS Take triphala, made from the extracts of three Indian plants that are used to help detoxify and rejuvenate the body.

YOGA Follow along with asana sequences by Scott Blossom, Anusara Yoga teacher Sianna Sherman, vinyasa flow teacher Janet Stone, and healing yoga teacher Chase Bossart. You'll heat the body and help stimulate the release of toxins from the tissues,

twist and fold to facilitate the movement of lymph and waste products, tune in to the natural flow of your breath, and rest deeply with restorative poses (which are also featured on page 78).

BREATHING Learn Uddiyana Bandha and how to tune in deeply to the breath and to move from its natural rhythm.

MEDITATION Download guided meditations by teacher Chandra Easton to enhance self-healing.

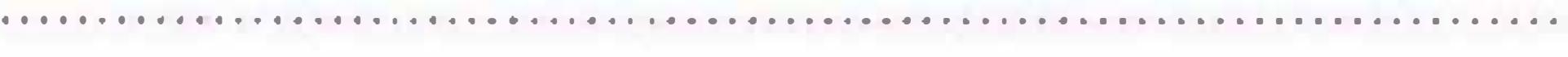
SELF-CARE Learn a soothing Ayurvedic abhyanga massage, clear your sinuses with the neti pot, and use nasal oil to ward off germs.

✖ The Fall Detox starts September 12, but you can join anytime.

which excess pitta can accumulate and cause problems. According to Claudia Welch, an Ayurvedic practitioner and the author of *Balance Your Hormones, Balance Your Life*, the liver processes not only the foods and drinks we ingest but also many of the chemicals we encounter on a daily basis—from prescription and over-the-counter medications to hand soap to particulate matter in the air. And when the liver gets overloaded with excess pitta (which puts stress on the liver), so do we. An overtaxed liver can result in migraines, irritability, rashes, anger,

and more. “We get tired, we get sick, we gain or lose too much weight,” she says. As the two systems in the body designed to “transform” toxins—the liver and the digestive tract—become overwhelmed, we start to collect a kind of toxic sludge made up of all the waste products that the body has not been able to properly break down, digest, or otherwise expel.

The toxins our body cannot process have a name in Ayurveda: *ama* (Sanskrit for “that which harms or weakens”). Ayurvedic physician Robert Svoboda



step 1 slowing down

characterizes ama not only as a kind of physical sludge, but also as a psychosomatic sludge that pollutes the mind. Accumulated amais the basis for much disease and emotional malaise—and from a physical standpoint, it creates an appealing host environment for cold and flu viruses that blow in on autumn's winds.

Think you don't have to worry about ama? Not so fast. We all do, Svoboda says, as a result of poor diet choices, unhealthy lifestyle habits—even just living and breathing in a polluted world. "Pretty much no matter who you are, you'll end up with ama," he says. "The question you have to ask yourself is, 'What do I do about it?'"

clean sweep To protect your health yearround, but particularly during the fall, Ayurvedic health educators say it's important to slow down, support your liver's natural ability to remove toxins from the body, and take stock of the influences that you allow into your life—from the kind of food you eat to the amount of time you spend in front of an electronic device (computer, cell phone, TV). That's the basis of this fall detox program.

Unlike some popular cleanses that ask you to undergo dramatic fasts or to take other extreme measures, **purvakarma** (which literally means "up-front actions") is designed to support, instead of shock, your system. "Rather than aiming to eliminate toxins at any cost, purvakarma gently balances the whole person so that they can detox without destabilizing the body in any way," Blossom explains. "It is a middle-path cleanse that uses nourishing foods, herbs, and self-care techniques to rejuvenate the body rather than simply strip it down, which can leave you even more vulnerable going into winter."

This program includes a simplified diet, yoga asana, self-massage, nasal irrigation, herbs, meditation, pranayama, and reflection. (For more information, see yogajournal.com/detox.) During the cleanse, you'll forgo substances and habits that contribute to liver overload—such as processed foods or alcohol—and the unaddressed stress that strains your nervous system. You'll also spend time thinking about what influences you want to keep in your life and what you might want to let go. "The key to purvakarma is that it's a suspension of bad habits," Blossom explains. "Only then can you have space to establish the good habits you need to create the kind of health and vibrancy you want for your life."

Reducing stress and mental overactivity is perhaps the most important element of a successful detox plan, Blossom says. Habitual rushing, multitasking, and dealing with information overloads are the trifecta of American toxicity. And like an overtaxed liver; an overtaxed mind and nervous system can lead to a host of health issues, including adrenal fatigue, insomnia, irregular menstrual cycles, indigestion, and unwanted weight gain.

The first step in reducing the toxicity created by an overloaded life? Slowing down. During the next seven days, adjust your schedule so you have time to prepare and eat your meals in a relaxed manner, practice daily yoga, and take regular meditation breaks. By saying "no" to the outside influences that pull your attention and energy in so many directions—and replacing them with healthier choices—you'll begin to tune into your body's natural rhythms and detox more effectively.

step 2 detox diet

Next, you need to nourish your body with healthful, cleansing foods. At the heart of the dietary program is kitchari, a simple dish of rice and mung beans widely used throughout Asia to purify the body. Its balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fat makes for an easy-to-digest yet highly nourishing meal.

Kitchari is also tridoshic, which means that it's appropriate for all three doshas. "The lightness of the dish reduces kapha in the body," Blossom says. "At the same time, it stabilizes vata by offering a complete source of protein. And the astringent nature of the beans cools pitta, so kitchari



Detoxing can be delicious.

Find recipes at yogajournal.com/falldetox.

step 4 self-study

As you go through the program, contemplate the ultimate question: "Why am I doing this?" By interrupting your normal patterns, cleansing provides a unique opportunity to practice svadhyaya, self-study. No matter what your motivation is—better health, a simpler life, a deeper yoga practice—you'll be amazed at the insights you can gain when you just slow down and start to listen.

"The body should be telling us all the time what to do and what not to do—it knows what's good for it and what is not," Sloboda says. "The key is to get out of your own way." And that is the point, says Blossom. "At the end of the cleanse, you should take a day to meditate and observe and to ask yourself: 'What are the things I'm doing to make my life the best it can be? What things am I doing to sabotage myself?'"

During the detox, and especially on the last day, Blossom encourages taking time to contemplate not only what you want for your own life but also what you want to put out into the world. If you can, pass a half or a full day in silence, and spend time in nature or journaling about your experience. Did the cleanse give you clarity about how you may be exerting energy in ways that don't serve you, and where you can use that energy more effectively, perhaps even to help a larger cause?

Get clear on the answers, and your life will get simpler: Do what works; don't do what doesn't. "When you temporarily change your daily routines, you open yourself up to seeing and feeling from new perspectives," Blossom says.

Hillari Dowdle is a freelance writer in Knoxville, Tennessee.

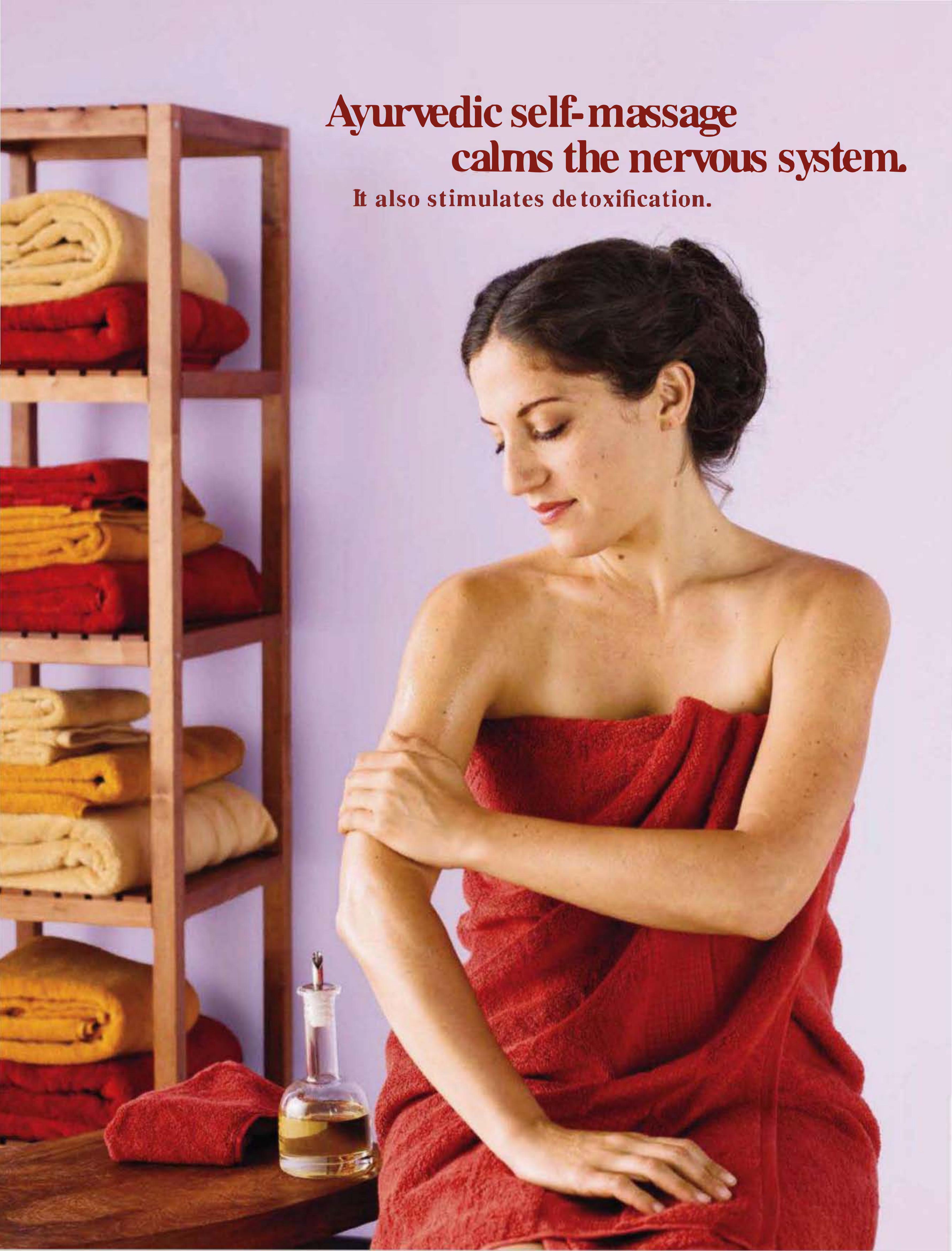
 is naturally anti-inflammatory." Best of all, eating kitchari twice daily keeps hunger and cravings at bay, he says.

The Fall Detox also calls for ghee (clarified butter), which lubricates the digestive tract and facilitates the elimination of toxins from the body. Spicy teas and chutneys are recommended to keep the fires of digestion stoked throughout the cleanse; and triphala, a traditional Ayurvedic digestive tonic (made up of three fruits—amalaki, bibhitaki, and haritaki) with antioxidant properties, acts as a mild laxative. "Triphala is a classic example of an Ayurvedic remedy that supports the system and preserves what is good while it gets rid of toxins that will sicken the body," Blossom explains. "Take it together; all parts of this plan make sure you're getting everything you need to stay healthy and you won't be malnourished in any way."

The general approach to this cleanse can work for anyone; however, you can get better results by customizing it for yourself based on your own current dosha imbalances. Take our quiz, and find recipes and dosha-specific recommendations at yogajournal.com/falldetox.

Step 3 cleansing yoga

Specific yoga poses can help expedite the detoxification process. The heating and twisting sequences designed for this plan (there are seven videos online at yogajournal.com/falldetox) can help move toxins from your tissues through your lymphatic and digestive systems so that they can be eliminated from the body. In addition, restorative poses, such as the ones on page 78, relax the nervous system and mind and help settle the body—which is especially important during and after a detox cleanse. Restorative poses will also help bring you into a state of receptivity that's perfect for the season, says New Jersey yoga teacher and restorative teacher trainer Jillian Pransky. "I look at autumn as a transition into a new year," she says. "I look at nature: The harvest is over, and it's time to clear out. It's an opportunity to till the soil and plant the seeds for next year's harvest. Once we do this for ourselves, we can recommit to what is working for us and set ourselves up to get more of what nourishes us in our lives."



Ayurvedic self-massage
calms the nervous system.

It also stimulates detoxification.

rest AND restore

by Scott Blossom

As you go through the Fall Detox program, you will be practicing yoga sequences that are designed to heat the body and facilitate the removal of waste and toxins. (Seven instructional videos can be found on yoga.journal.com/falldetox.) Make time for relaxation and restorative yoga to support the body during this process.

Practice the following restorative sequence daily during the program and plan to do an extended version of it on the last day of your cleanse. (Detailed instruction about each pose's setup and additional video instruction can be found online.)

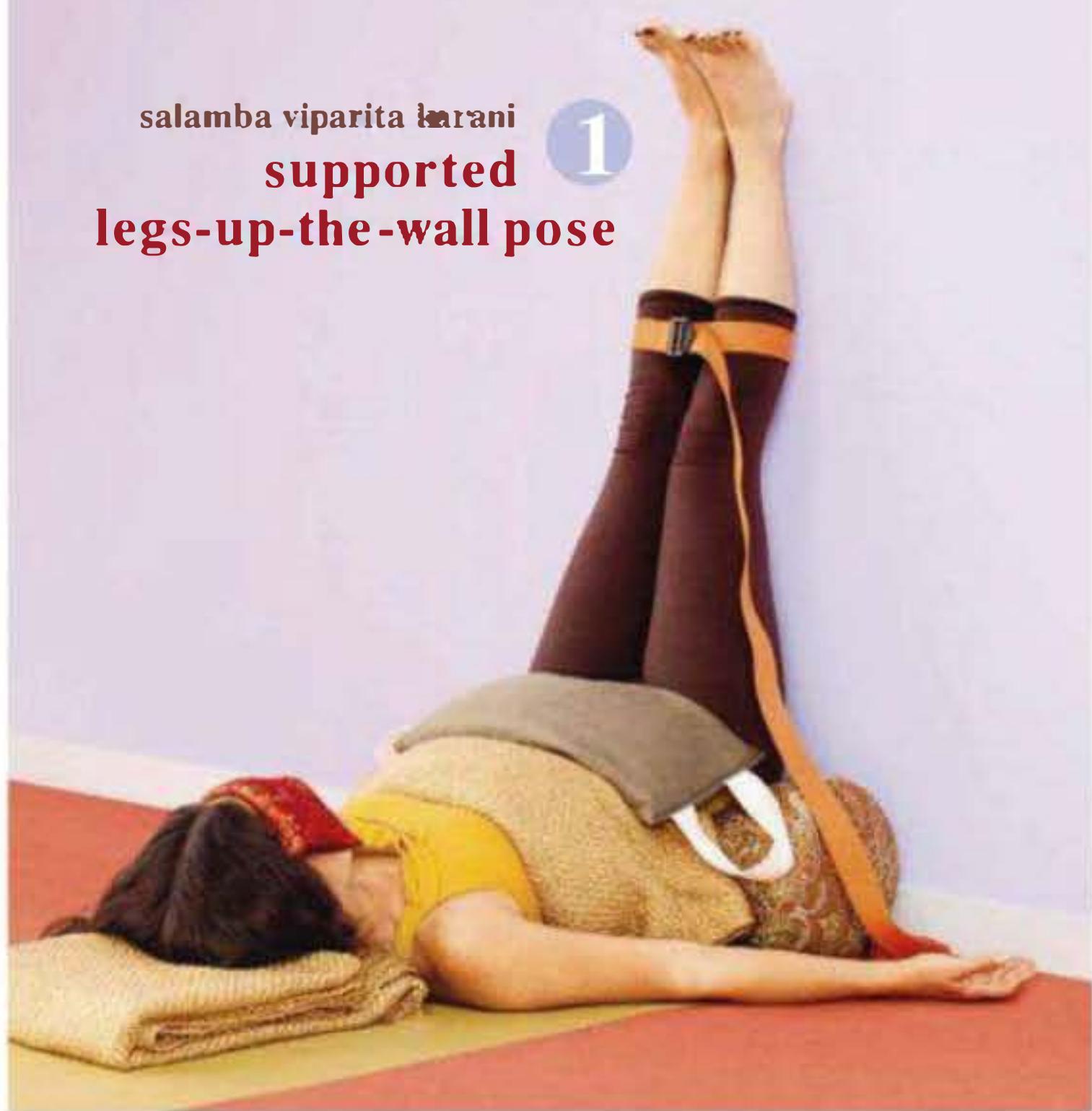
These poses are designed to relax the nervous system and mind. There are a lot of props involved; they will allow you to sink deeply and deliciously into yourself. In each pose, you can also cover yourself with a blanket for greater comfort (not shown). Spend at least three to five minutes in each pose. As you become more comfortable with them, you can stay longer.

Props

- 1 yoga mat
- 1 bolster
- 1 yoga strap
- 1 sandbag or equivalent (such as a bag of sugar or rice)
- 4 blankets
- 1 eye pillow or equivalent (a towel or a piece of light clothing, like a shirt)

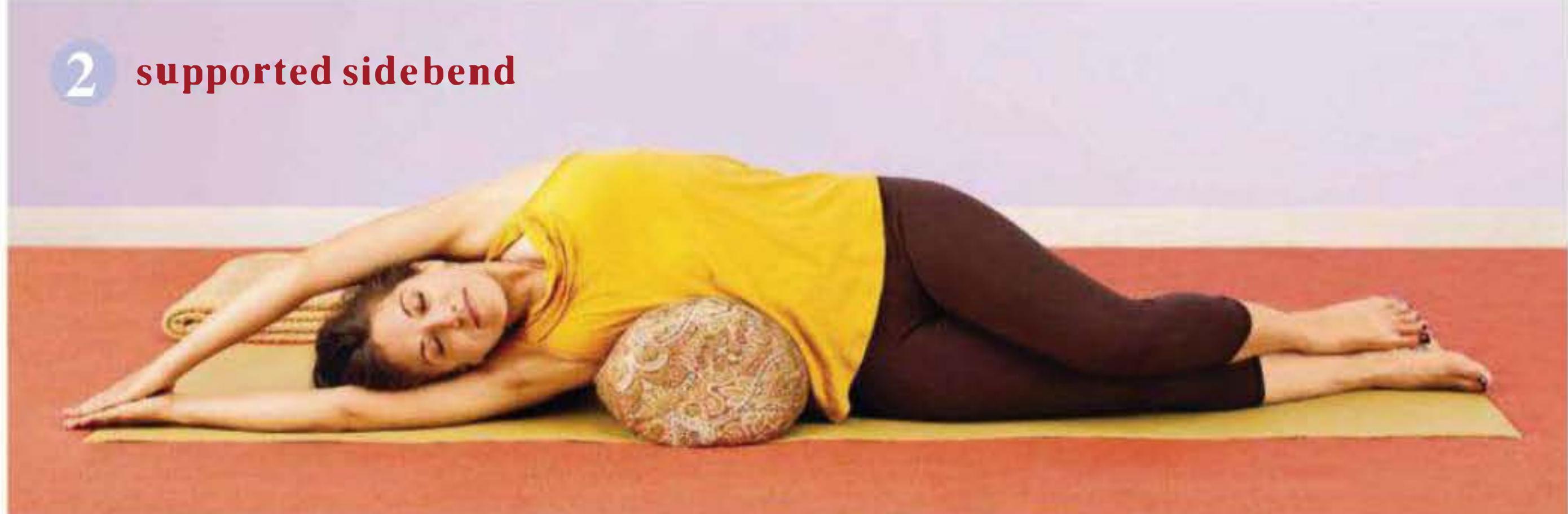
salamba viparita karani supported legs-up-the-wall pose

1



Set your mat vertically against a wall and place a bolster across it horizontally. Fold a blanket to the size of a bed pillow; then fold it again two-thirds of the way down so you have a thinner edge (for your neck) and a thicker edge (for your head). Sit on the bolster with your left hip against the wall. Tip back as you turn your legs up the wall, and lower yourself so that your middle and upper back are on the mat, and your head and neck are on the blanket, forehead slightly higher than your chin. Bend your knees and put your feet through a loop in the strap, tightening it gently around your shins, and reset your legs up the wall. Place another blanket across your torso and a sandbag on your pelvis. Put the eye pillow over your eyes and rest your hands by your sides.

2 supported sidebend



Sitting with your right hip against the bolster, lean to the right, placing your right hand on the far side of the mat as you lower down. Stretch your right arm straight along the ground and rest your head on your biceps. Then stretch your left arm overhead and place your palms together. With

each exhalation, relax your entire body, paying special attention to your neck. When you're ready to switch sides, slowly turn your body facedown, and then gently press your hands into the ground to rise up. Repeat on the other side, and then take Child's Pose for a few breaths.

supported frog pose, variation

3

salamba mandukasana, variation



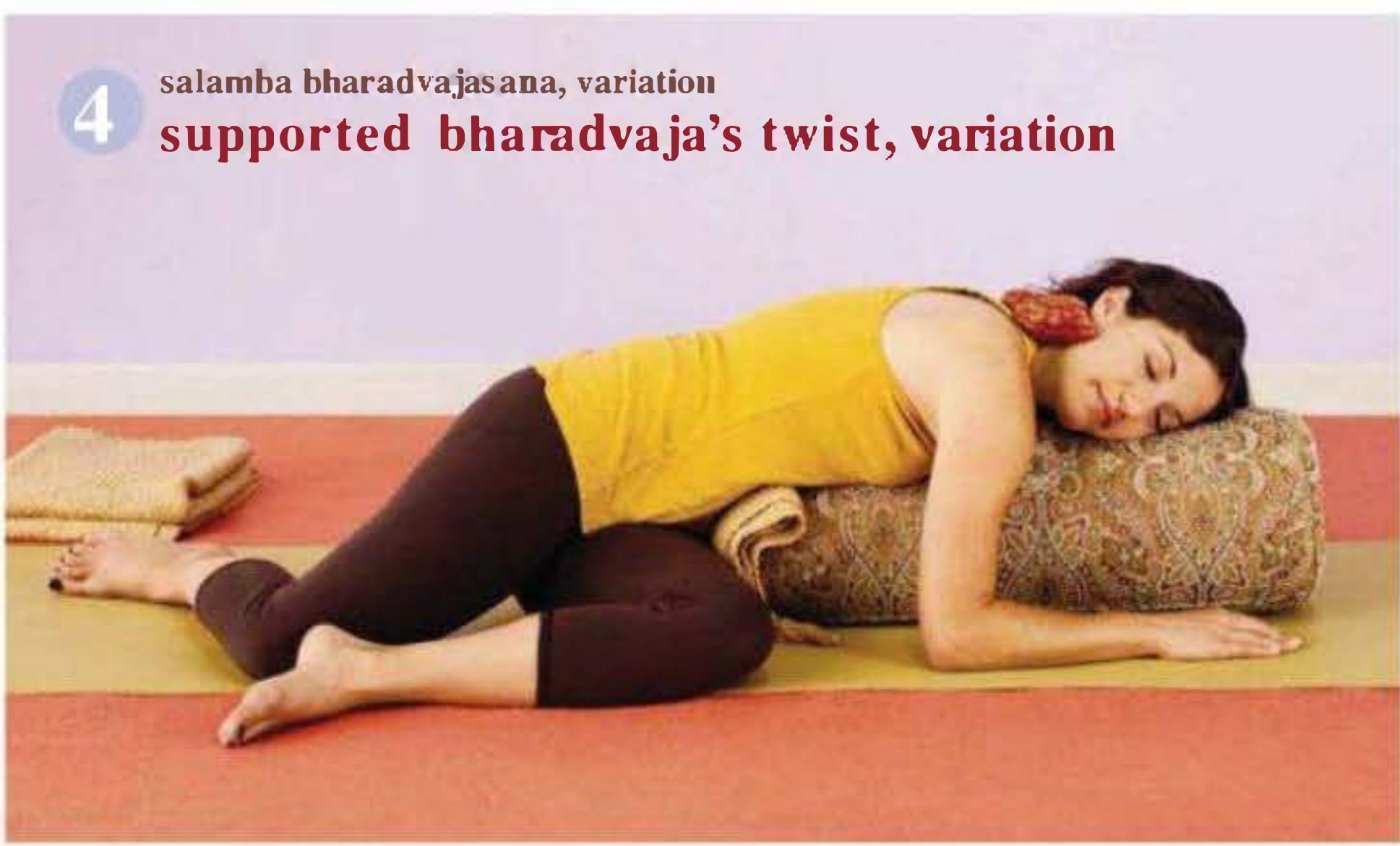
Put a folded blanket at the bottom end of the bolster and sit with your left hip against the edge of the blanket. Turn from your belly toward the bolster, placing your hands on either side, and lean down slowly until your forehead touches. Turn your head to the right, tucking your chin slightly. Keep the back of the neck long and the front of the throat soft. Finally, place the eye pillow across the nape of your neck and rest your hands and forearms along the floor. Allow your breath to slow down and deepen; observe how your inhalations root your pelvis and gently enhance the turning sensation in the belly and shoulders. When you're ready, change sides.

Come onto all fours, with knees wide and big toes touching. Place a bolster lengthwise between your knees and sit back on your heels. Walk your hands forward along the mat until your upper body comes down onto the bolster. Turn your head to one side and deeply relax. On each inhalation, follow the breath into your belly and low back. On each exhalation, release your knees, hips, shoulders, and neck. (Turn your head to the other side when you're halfway done.)

4

salamba bharadvajasana, variation

supported bharadvaja's twist, variation



supported reclining bound angle pose

5

salamba supta baddha konasana



Prepare a pillow as you did for the first pose and place it on the top end of the bolster. Sit with your back to the bolster; bring the soles of your feet together; and let your knees drop open, positioning a rolled blanket under each one. Lay a sandbag across your feet, and, using your hands behind you on the mat, slowly lower down onto the bolster. Adjust the head blanket so your forehead is higher than your chin, place an eye pillow over your eyes, and rest your hands on the ground. Allow your breath to slow down and deepen. With each exhalation, allow your abdomen to soften as much as possible.

BY PEG MULQUEEN

Meet 5 IMPASSIONED YOGIS who work all day and then MOONLIGHT as yoga teachers—because there's no greater gift to share than the practice.

THOSE WHO CAN,

“Yoga opened me up to a lot of different things. Engineering is just about the mind, but when you're on the mat, you realize the mind, body, and spirit are not separate. They are all one.

**ERIC BROWN,
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**

Peg Mulqueen is a writer and a Rocket-style Ashtanga Yoga teacher in Washington, DC.



DAY JOB former Boeing aerospace engineer, aerospace industry magazine data analyst, and father of two

MOONLIGHTS AS a yoga teacher influenced by his studies in Kripalu, Kundalini, Ashtanga, and Iyengar styles.

YEARS TEACHING 7

WHY I TEACH Yoga has been one of the greatest gifts in my life, and I'm passionate about sharing it. I hope what I can bring to my classes is a way to show students that yoga can be part of your life no matter what you are doing.

PHOTO BY RYAN DONNELL



“I’m up there with my own flaws, just doing my best. But that’s just what my students love. I’m a real person who can relate to people who have real stuff going on in their lives. If yoga can transform me into someone healthier, happier, and stronger, then this must be possible for any of us.”

MINDY PIAND, PURCELLVILLE, VIRGINIA

DAY JOB bus driver for Loudoun County public schools and mother of three

MOONLIGHTS AS a Power Vinyasa teacher and the owner of Yoga Time Studio

YEARS TEACHING 6

WHY I TEACH As a single working mom, my life is pretty hectic, but I know I must continue to put myself out there. We all need this yoga so badly.

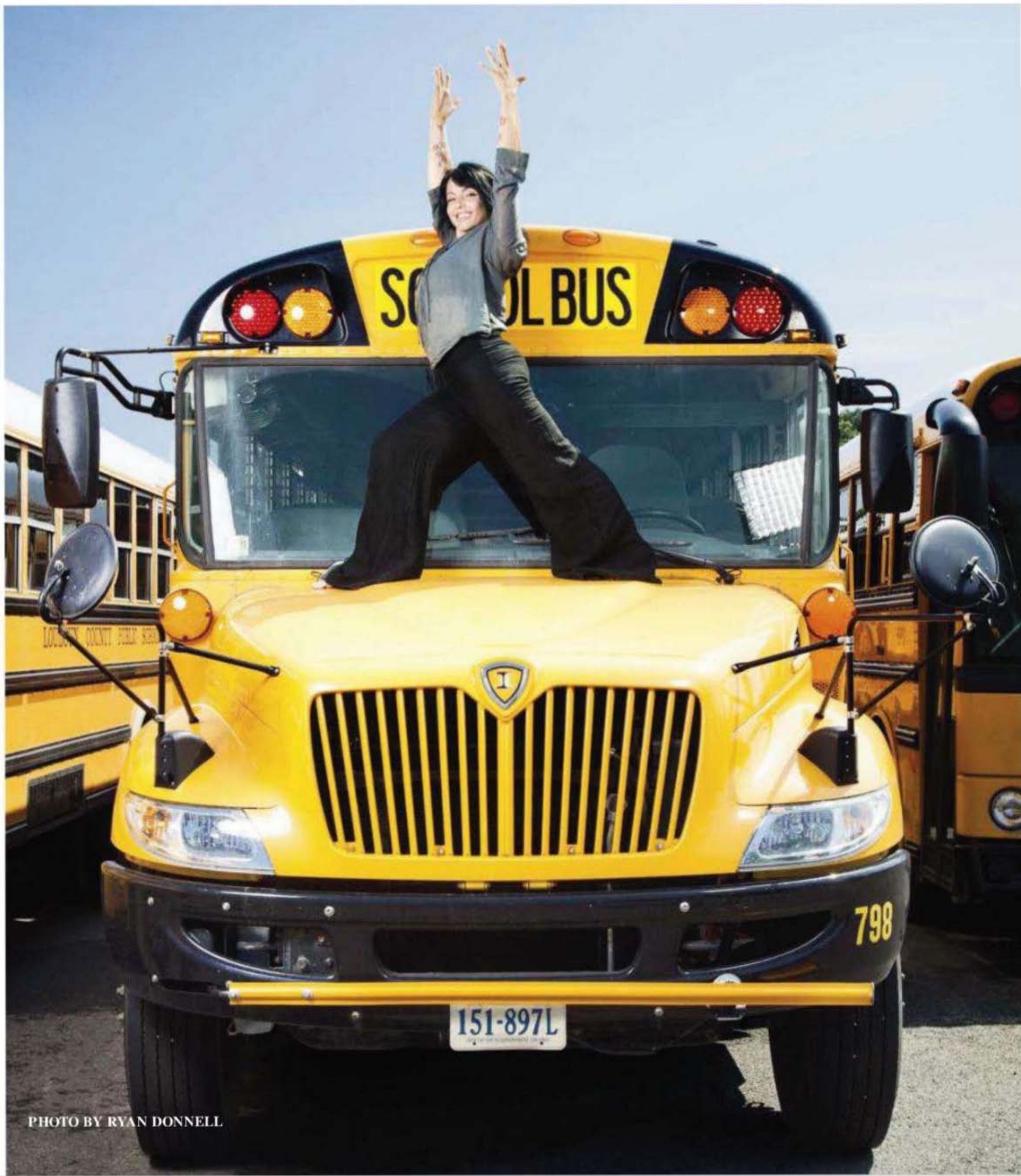
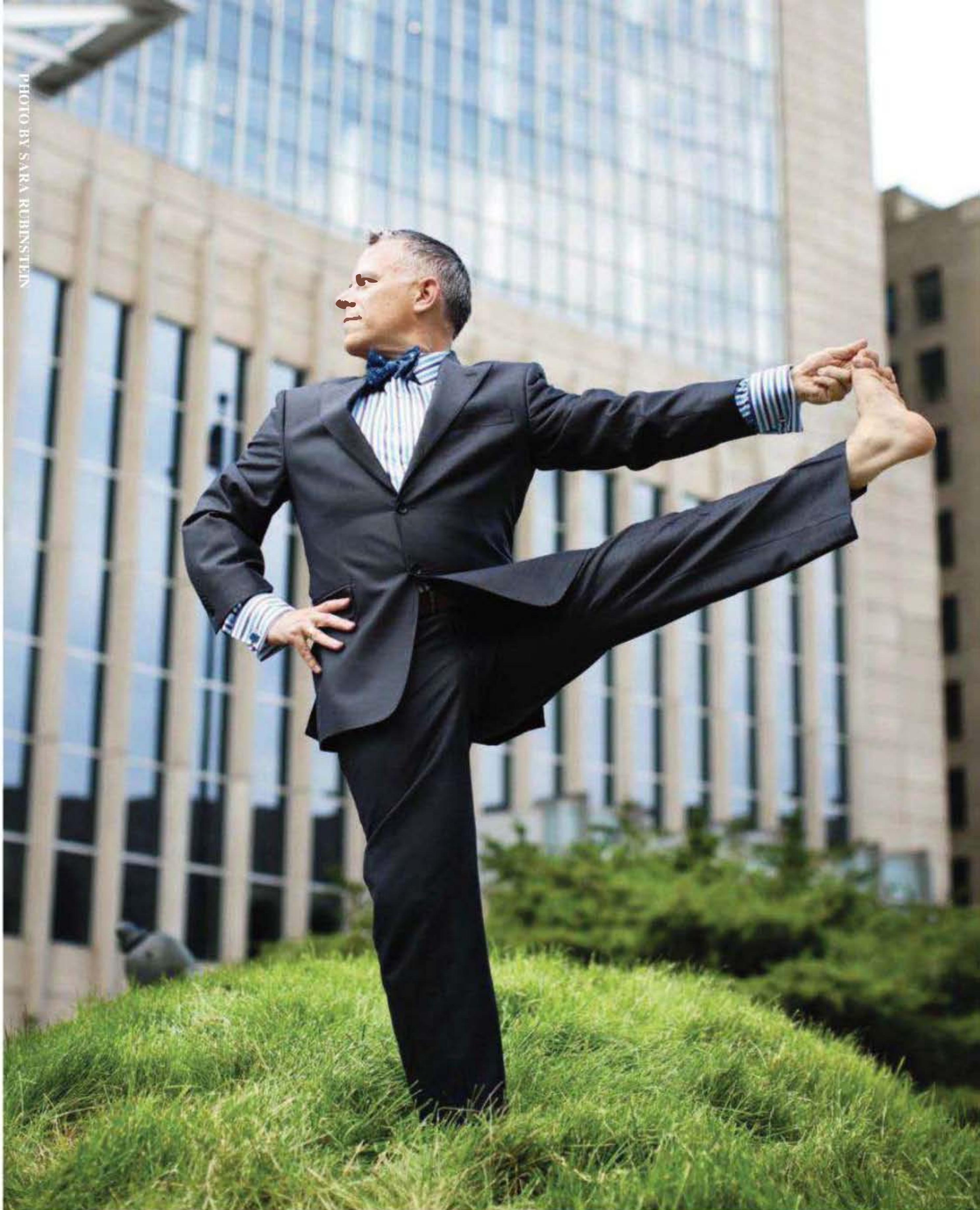


PHOTO BY RYAN DONNELL



“If you organize your life around the things you are passionate about, nothing is a time burden. You end up spending time with people you want to spend time with and doing what you love.

JEFFREY BORES, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

DAY JOB attorney and managing partner

MOONLIGHTS AS a vinyasa yoga teacher and the owner of TaraNa Yoga Studio

YEARS TEACHING 11

WHY I TEACH I never really planned to open a studio, but as time went on, I let go of some things I thought I was going to do, and then other doors opened up. Providing the type of yoga community I was looking for in the Twin Cities was one of those doors.

“You learn something best when you teach it to someone else. Teaching helps me walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

DAWN STERNSTEIN,
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DAY JOB behavioral health psychologist and mother of one

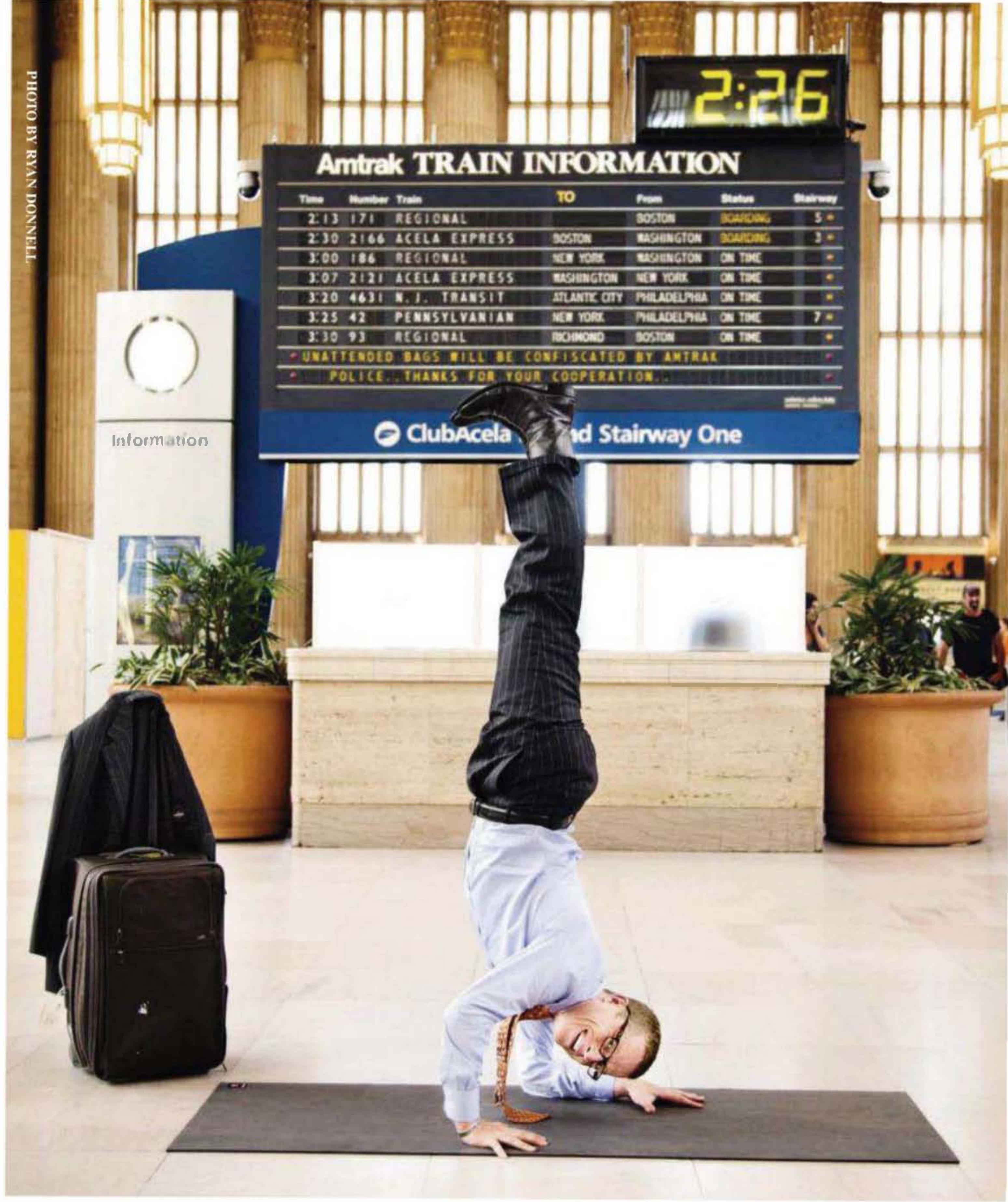
MOONLIGHTS AS an Ashtanga-inspired and AcroYoga teacher

YEARS TEACHING 6

WHY I TEACH A friend and fellow teacher told me, “Your practice is for your students; your teaching is for you.” I was taken aback by that statement until I really examined my motivations and realized it’s true. I practice to feed my teaching; I teach to feed my life.



PHOTO BY ANDY REYNOLDS



“I travel on business so often that usually, when my plane lands in DC, I taxi over to the studio, put my bag down, and get ready to teach class. When I teach, it clears my head, no matter how much stress is in my life.

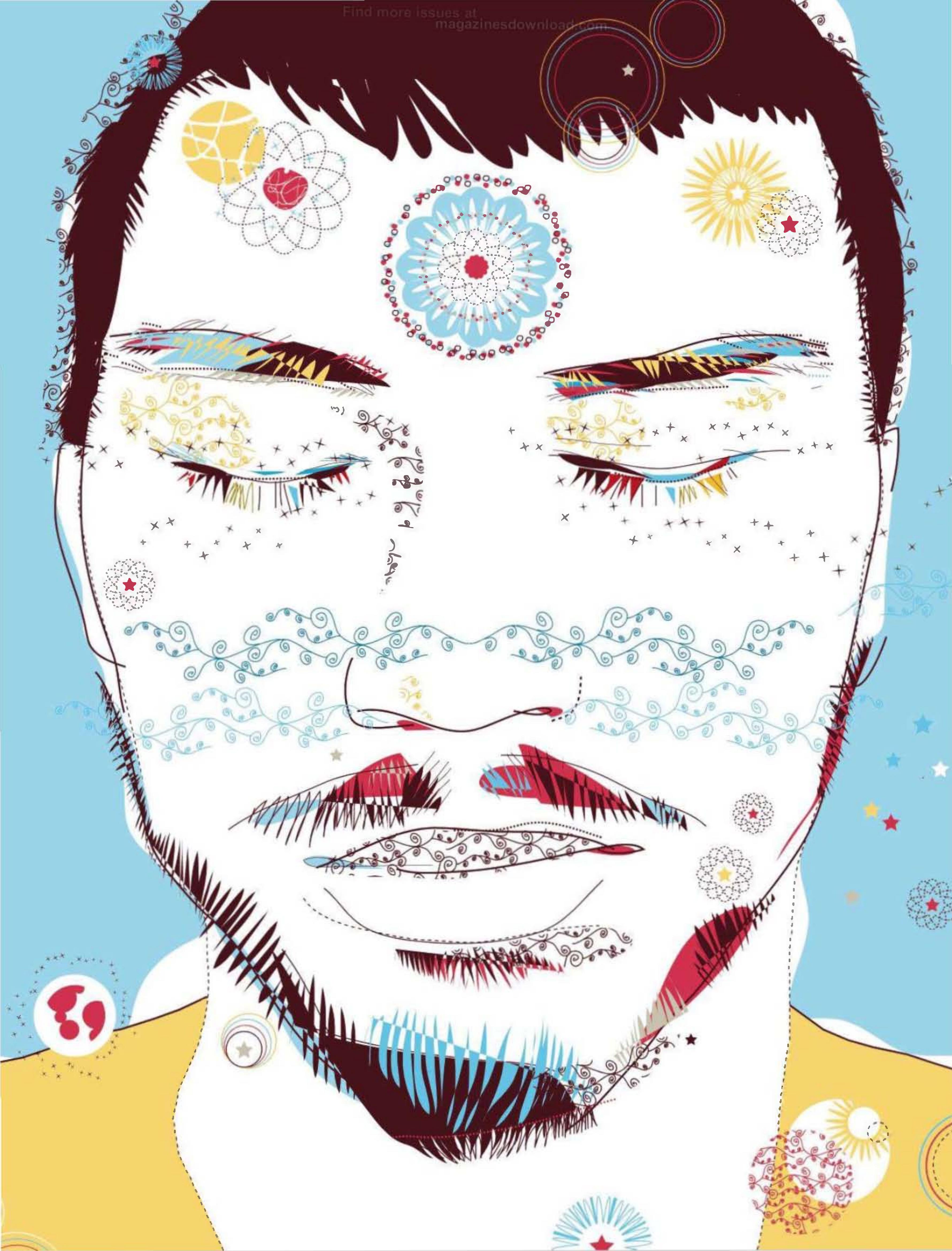
MIKE GRAGIA, WASHINGTON, DC

DAY JOB project leader for a global management consulting firm

MOONLIGHTS AS a dharma yoga teacher

YEARS TEACHING 5

WHY I TEACH I love the chance to form a community of practitioners who are playing with their practice. That community gives me so much energy and joy that it helps me be better in every other part of my life.



heavenly rest

For the fullest experience of yoga and a deep connection with your vital energies, Savasana, or Corpse Pose, is one posture you can't live without.

There I was, cocooned in warmth and darkness, feeling as light as air and as relaxed and carefree as a million-dollar Lotto winner on a Caribbean beach. I might have been a space traveler in suspended animation, rocketing off at light speed to a new solar system, or even an infant in the womb, except that I had a vague sense I was watching myself in a state of what could best be described as alert relaxation.

Begin to bring awareness to your inhalation...

That voice...so familiar. Cautiously, I opened one eye and found that I was not floating along on a river of soothing darkness or soaring through the outer reaches of the Milky Way, but lying motionless on the floor of Om Tara Yoga studio in Massapequa, New York.

When you're ready, gently roll to one side... observe how you feel...It was Maria Yakkey, my regular Thursday-morning yoga teacher. Soon,

a half dozen classmates and I were alert and energized, sitting in Sukhasana (Easy Pose) with our legs crossed, bowing to the Divine within.

Namaste. Then class was over.

As I was clearing up my props, Maria came over to me. "John," she said. "You're really getting better at Savasana."

I almost dropped a pair of blocks on my foot. Better? At Savasana? You mean, my ability to imitate a corpse has improved?

"You used to be more fidgety," she said.

Understand: I'm an overcaffeinated, Type A, New York guy—and on top of that, I'm an avid marathon runner and gym rat. Of course I'm fidgety, and it's clear to me that I need yoga. Still, I thought, of all the things I haven't done well in my seven years of practice—which, to my mind, was almost everything—surely, lying quietly on the floor was the exception.

"So," I said, "I'm getting better at lying on the floor?"

Maria sighed and looked at me reproachfully. "Savasana is a lot more than just lying on the floor!"

BY JOHN RANC
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREA COBB

Now, don't get me wrong: I enjoy that delicious rest at the end of class. But until I gave it serious consideration, I thought of Savasana as a yogic chill pill, built into the end of practice to calm yuppies and soccer moms before they climb back into their SUVs and start texting their way to the nearest Starbucks.

But Maria is right. Savasana is much more. This traditional Indian yoga practice is a very purposeful resting pose. After a well-designed sequence, you should feel simultaneously invigorated and relaxed, your mind calm and focused. If you stay alert and keep your mind from wandering while practicing Corpse Pose, you're bound to reap enormous benefits. By lying down and resting after practicing asana, you can experience what teachers call Presence, or Being—that quality of awareness that is not dependent on your external circumstances, your body type, your personality, or your activities, but that simply is—the part of you that is present even when your body and mind have temporarily "died" from the duties and pleasures of daily life. In the quiet stillness of Savasana, your body and mind have a chance to synthesize all the actions, instructions, and sensations you experienced

in class. It gives you an opportunity to integrate your experiences from practice so that you can carry that calm, heightened awareness into every situation you encounter thereafter. Many teachers consider it to be the most important asana, because this quiet, humble pose can bring you closest to the true spirit and goal of yoga, the realization that you are part of something larger than your individual self.

"How often in life do we give ourselves permission to lie still, relax, and just breathe?" asks Christina Geithner, a yoga teacher and professor of human physiology at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. The benefits of Savasana, says Geithner, who is also a spokeswoman for the American College of Sports Medicine, include reduced muscle tension throughout the body and engagement of the relaxation response in a quiet place without distractions. Plus, you let go of the concerns of the day.

"Body, mind, and spirit are re-integrated, and pleasant mental states are produced. It's a wonderful way of bringing the practice to a close in a calm, relaxing way before transitioning off the mat," she says.

continued on page 106

a Savasana to die for

Follow Richard Rosen's nuanced instructions for what might appear to be a very simple pose, and feel your mind, body, and breath release deeply into Savasana.

Lie on your back and bring your body into as neutral a position as possible for you. Your brain experiences misalignment in Savasana as a disturbance, so the more you're able to bring yourself into balance, the more your brain will quiet down. Once this happens, what you normally perceive as the limits of your body start to soften and dissolve, and you begin to feel consciously expansive.

Place your arms by your sides at a 45-degree angle to your torso with your hands palms-up, each one resting on the same knuckle. Adjust your legs so that they're at equal angles from a midline drawn

through your torso, with your heels only a few inches apart. Move your head so your ears are an equal distance from your shoulders and your eyes are an equal distance from the ceiling, so your head is not tilted or turned. The more you can bring your body into a neutral position, the more your brain can let go.

Once you're in a neutral position, make sure that your tongue is resting on the floor of your mouth. Your tongue has its own midline, so you want to be sure to spread the tongue from the midline out equally on both sides. Drop your eyes toward the back of their sockets. Soften your nose and deepen your ear canals so that you're listening to the sound of your breath from deep inside the back of your head. And finally, soften the skin of the bridge of your nose, or the space between your eyebrows.

Once you feel settled in your center and your organs of perception softening, visualize your brain inside your skull. Imagine that you can feel your brain shrinking, getting smaller and smaller, moving away from the inner lining of the skull. Then imagine your brain releasing onto the back of your head.

Keep your eyes as still as possible, resting in the back of their sockets.

On your inhalation, receive the breath without effort. Feel your brain recede from your forehead and release toward the back of your head. On your exhalation, allow the breath to release gracefully.

For the next few minutes, it's important to stay as still and present as possible. Allow the mass of your body to sink onto the back of your body—onto your heels, your calves, your buttocks and torso, the backs of your arms, and the back of your head. Feel your connection to the floor and maintain an awareness of your breath and the ambient sounds from the room around you to keep you rooted to the present moment throughout your Savasana.

One way to gauge the time you might spend in Savasana is to plan to stay at least 5 minutes for every 30 minutes you've practiced. Otherwise, you can lie back and enjoy this delicious pose for 5 to 20 minutes.

listen

Be guided into a deep Savasana using an audio recording of this practice at yogajournal.com/livemag.



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better backbends

One simple alignment technique and three common poses to ensure pain-free backbends

When backbends feel good, they feel very, very good: They leave you feeling energized, expansive, even joyful. But when they feel bad, well, you can fill in the rest. Think compressed, crunchy lowerback, sacral pain, neck strain.

To make your backbends feel good more often, one of the most valuable things you can do is to initiate the bend by tilting your pelvis backward in a posterior tilt and lightly drawing your lower abdomen back. When you learn to align your pelvis and engage your abdomen this way, it helps you to keep your lower back long and compression free.

Yoga props can help you reinforce this skillful action. In this column, you will discover some creative ways to incorporate props into your next backbend practice. The depth and comfort you experience will help you fall in love and stay in love with these postures for a very long time.

the goal

Learn the correct pelvic and abdominal actions in backbends. Doing so will decompress your lower back and allow the other parts of your backbend to flourish.

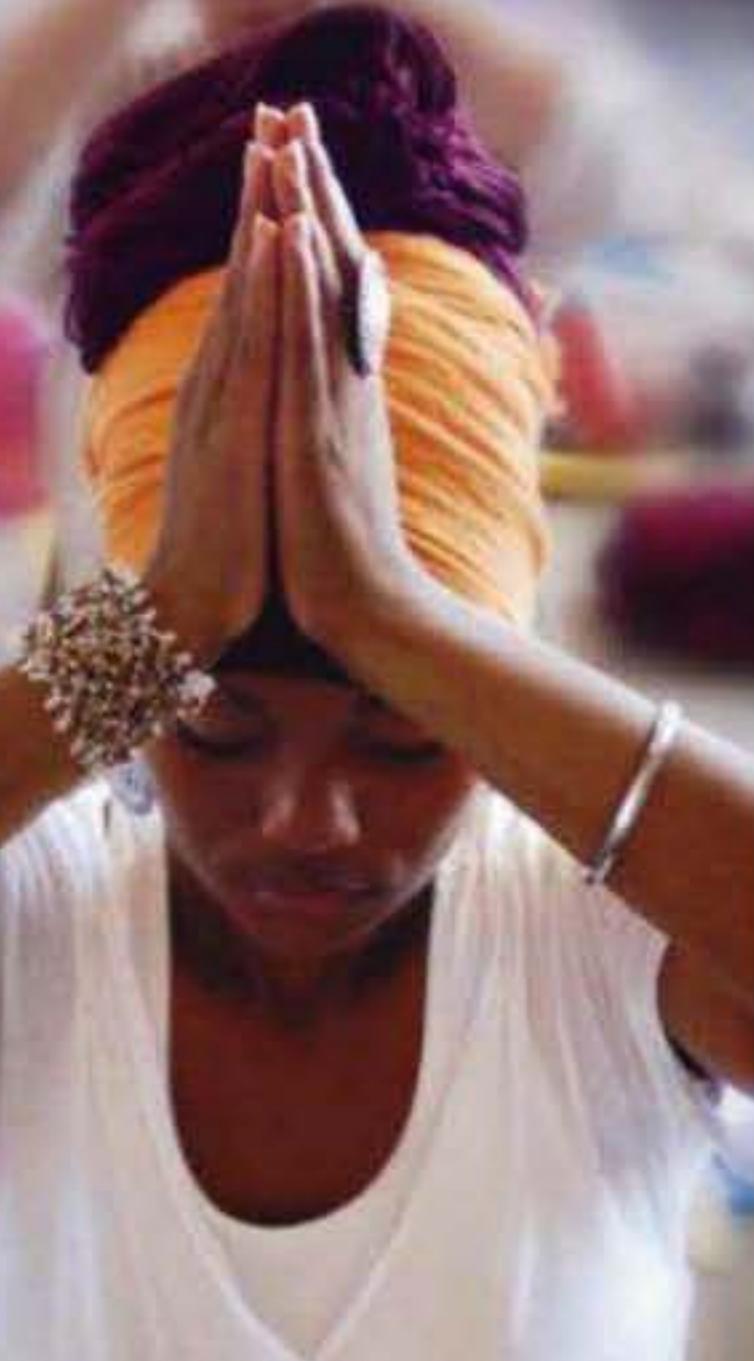
the anatomy

The lumbar spine (lower back) is relatively more mobile than the thoracic spine (upper back). It's also naturally concave. These qualities make it easier to move the lower back into spinal extension (backbend) than the upper back. As a result, we often overarch the lower back in backbends, while the upper back remains stiff.

the solution

Focus on initiating every backbend with a backward tilt of the pelvis. Draw the frontal hip points up, draw your lower belly back, and lengthen the tailbone toward the heels to decompress your spine as you bend.

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warm-up

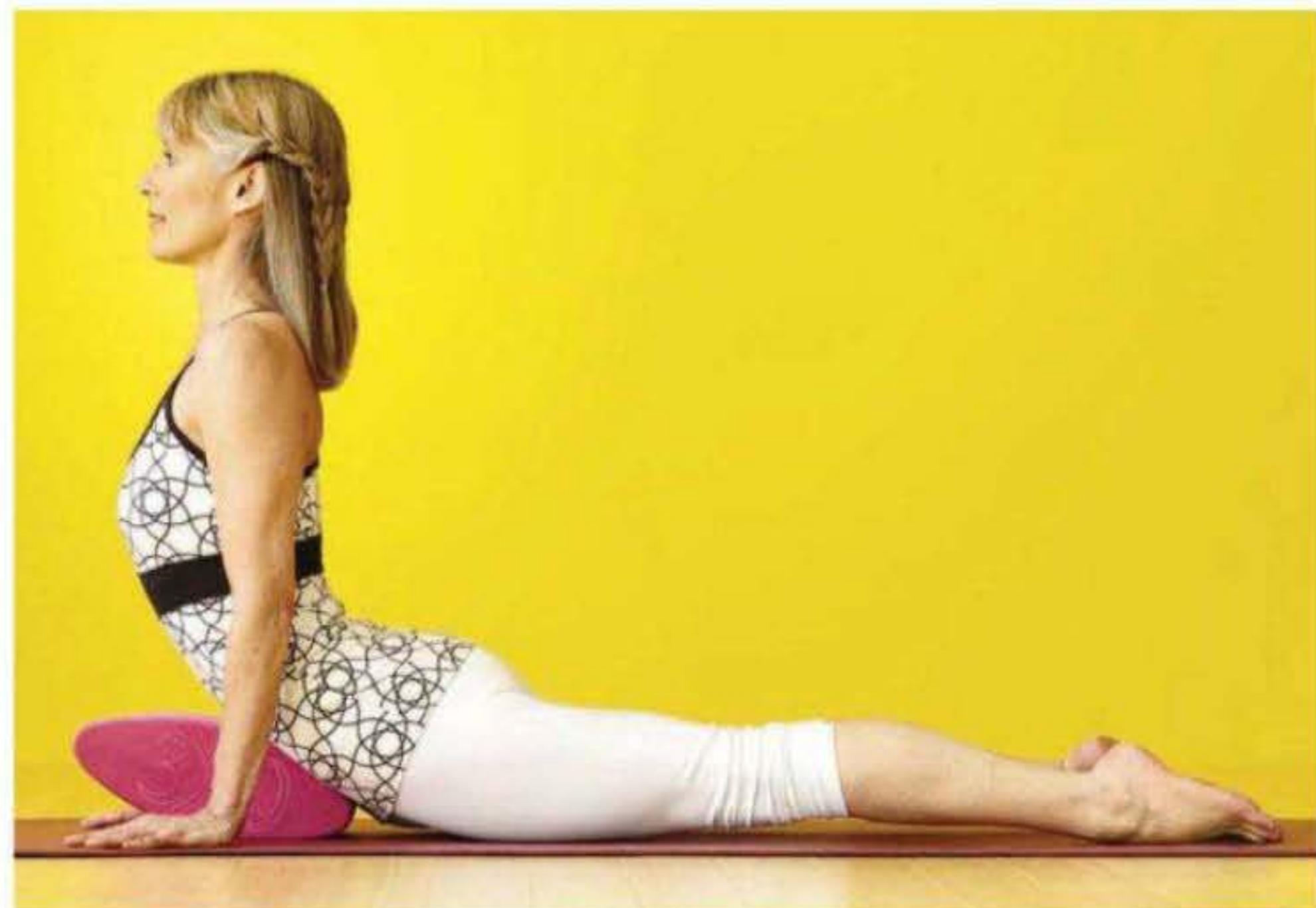
To do a posterior pelvic tilt in backbends, your hip flexors and quadriceps need to be open. Start with 5 to 7 Sun Salutations with High and Low Lunges. For a deeper opening, you can also do a Low Lunge with your back shin up against a wall. As you begin to feel more open, slowly draw your hips back toward the wall into King Arthur's Pose.

Sequence notes: Repeat each pose 2 to 3 times in a row. Once you get a feel for using the props, it becomes easier to focus on how they support and enhance the posterior tilt.

be in direct contact with any bony portion of your pelvis. If you have a narrow pelvis, the bolster might be too wide, in which case you can use two Three Minute Eggs (as we've used in our photos) or a blanket. (Fold the blanket like an accordion and roll up one end until it is the same height as a standard bolster.)

Once you are situated, place your hands on the floor, aligning your fingertips with the center of your chest. Press down through your hands and begin to lift the front of your chest, shoulders, and head into Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose). As you rise into the pose, feel the prop pressing against your lower abdomen. Allow the prop to help you draw your lower abdomen toward your spine, which will help you elongate your lower back.

Deepen the rest of your posture by hugging your elbows toward your sides, firming the bottom tips of your shoulder blades against your back, and encouraging your entire spine to move forward and up. Relax your temples, forehead, and jaw while taking 3 to 5 breaths. To release the pose, slowly lower the rest of your front body down to your bolster and turn your head to one side.



bhujangasana | cobra pose

propping Place a bolster or Three Minute Egg (egg-shaped foam block) beneath your abdominals.

why this works
It supports the abdomen, keeping the low back long.

how to The goal for this variation is to stimulate more engagement in your lower abdominal muscles as you do Cobra Pose. Place your bolster or two "eggs" vertically in the middle of your mat. Lie face-down on the bolsters so that the bottom edge is nestled just above your pubic bone and between each hip point. The bolster should not

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Todd Norian

Certified Anusara Yoga Teacher, Teacher Trainer, International Workshop Presenter, Musician, www.deeppeaceyoga.com

align + refine



urdhva mukha svanasana upward-facing dog pose

how to Set your blocks at their lowest height on the front edge of your sticky mat, shoulder-width apart. Come onto all fours, your hands on the blocks and your knees slightly behind your hips. Stay in this tabletop position and tilt

your pelvis as though you were initiating Cat Pose. Isolate the movement in your lower back: As you round, feel how your abdomen engages and your tailbone slightly tucks. Lift the front rim of your pelvis up and away from your thighs.

propping Elevate your hands on blocks.

why this works

Elevating your hands will provide you with better leverage to initiate the proper pelvic tilt.

Keeping your pelvis in a posterior tilt, move it forward and down until it is hovering a few inches above the floor. Keep your arms straight and come into Upward-Facing Dog by pressing down through the base of your toes, lifting your knees off the floor, and engaging your thighs. Root down through the base of your fingers and draw your spine into backbend. Support the backbend in your upper body by firming your shoulder blades against your upper back. Ideally, you'll feel an even arc along the whole length of the spine.

Take 3 to 5 smooth breaths; then lower your knees to the floor. Sit back on your heels to release the pose.

NEW

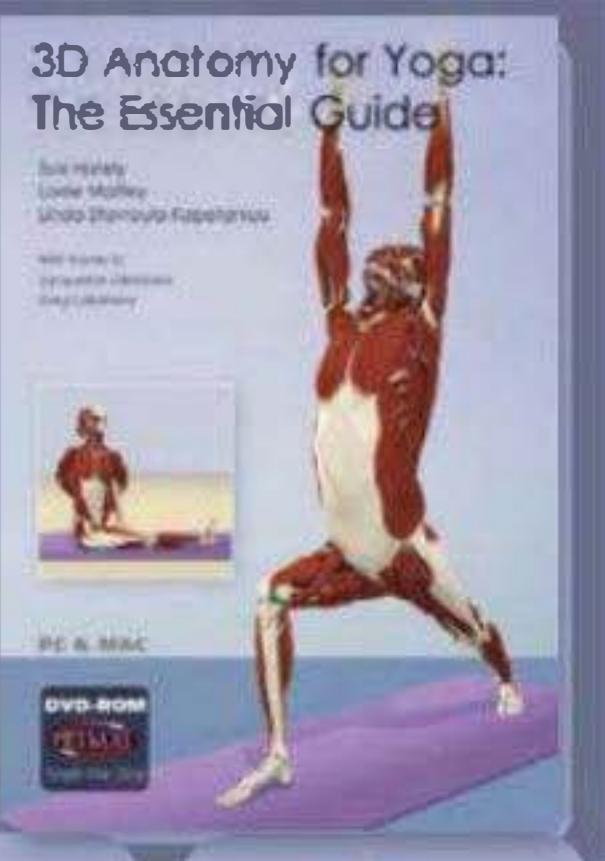
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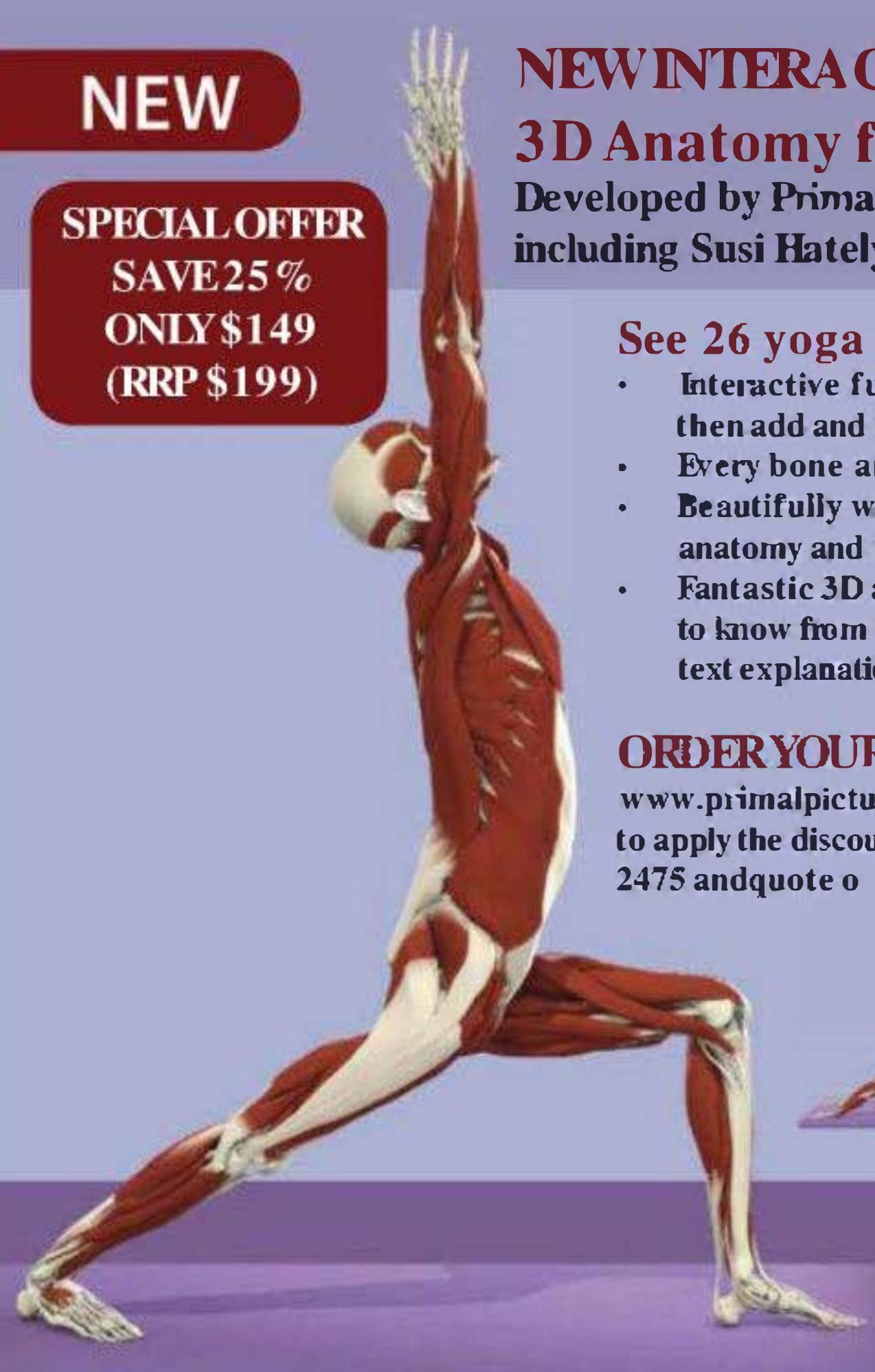
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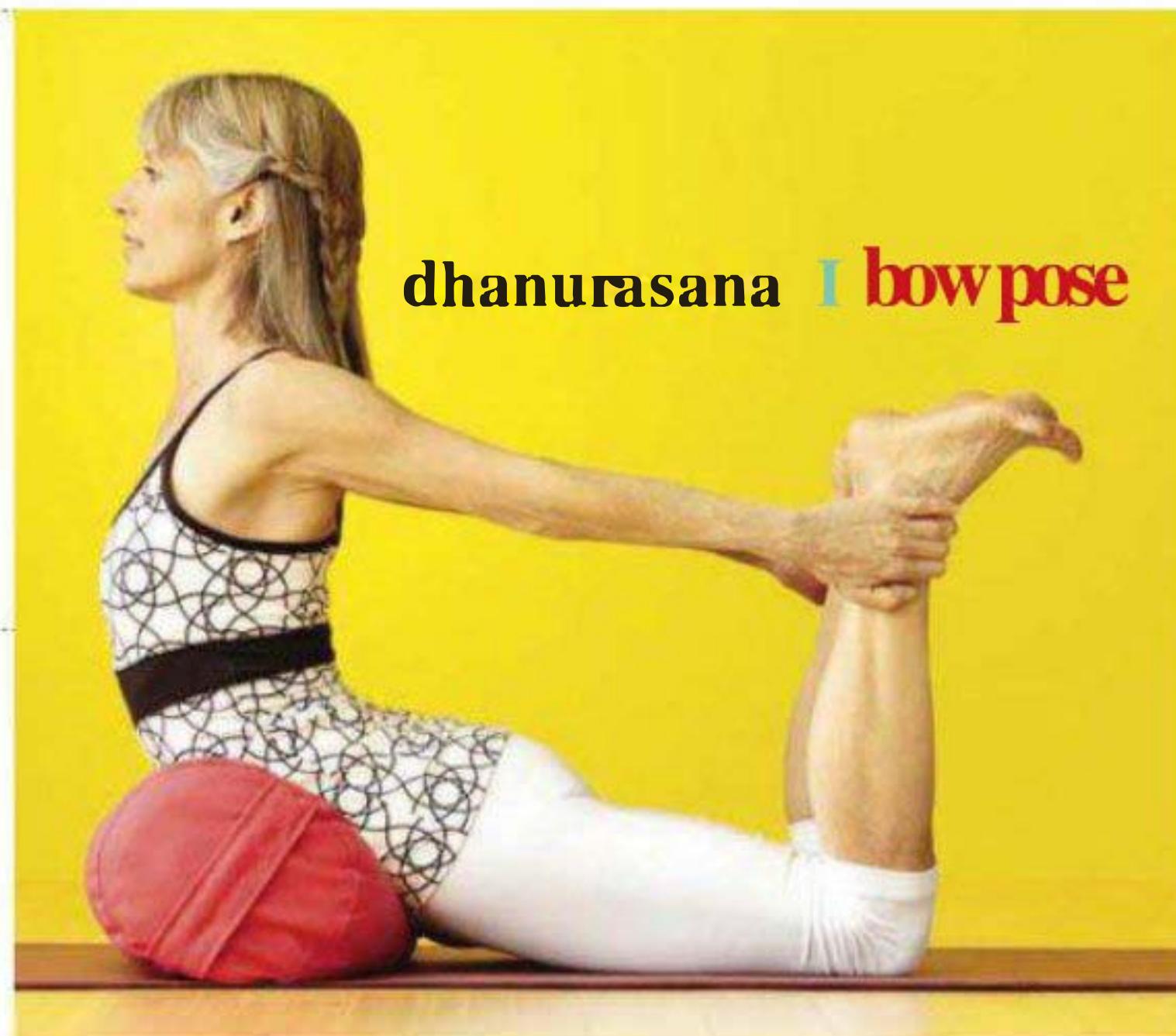
propping Place a bolster horizontally underneath your lower abdomen.

why this works

It keeps the front rim of your pelvis lifted and your low back long. The support of the bolster makes it easier to lift your chest and open your upper back.

how to Place a bolster horizontally across the middle of your sticky mat. Lie face-down over the bolster so that your hip points touch the edge of the bolster that's nearest to you. Place your forearms on the floor as though you were doing Sphinx Pose.

The placement of the bolster is key in this variation, and you'll sense whether you're in the right spot when you come all the way into the pose. If your hips are too far back on the bolster, you won't feel that the bolster is helping you rock your pelvis in the appropriate direction. If your hips are too far forward on the



dhanurasana bow pose

Jason Crandell teaches alignment-based vinyasa yoga workshops and teacher trainings around the world. For more information, visit him at jasonyoga.com.

bolster, you'll topple forward once you hold your ankles in Bow Pose.

Follow the cue that you are receiving from the bolster and gently engage your abdominal wall; this will help you continue tilting your pelvis backward. Exhale, bend your knees, and reach back to hold the front of your ankles. If you feel

yourself falling forward, simply adjust your position on the bolster.

Observe the deep opening of your chest and shoulders while your lower back arches mildly. Although it may be challenging to breathe as your diaphragm presses the bolster, take 3 to 5 breaths before releasing the pose.

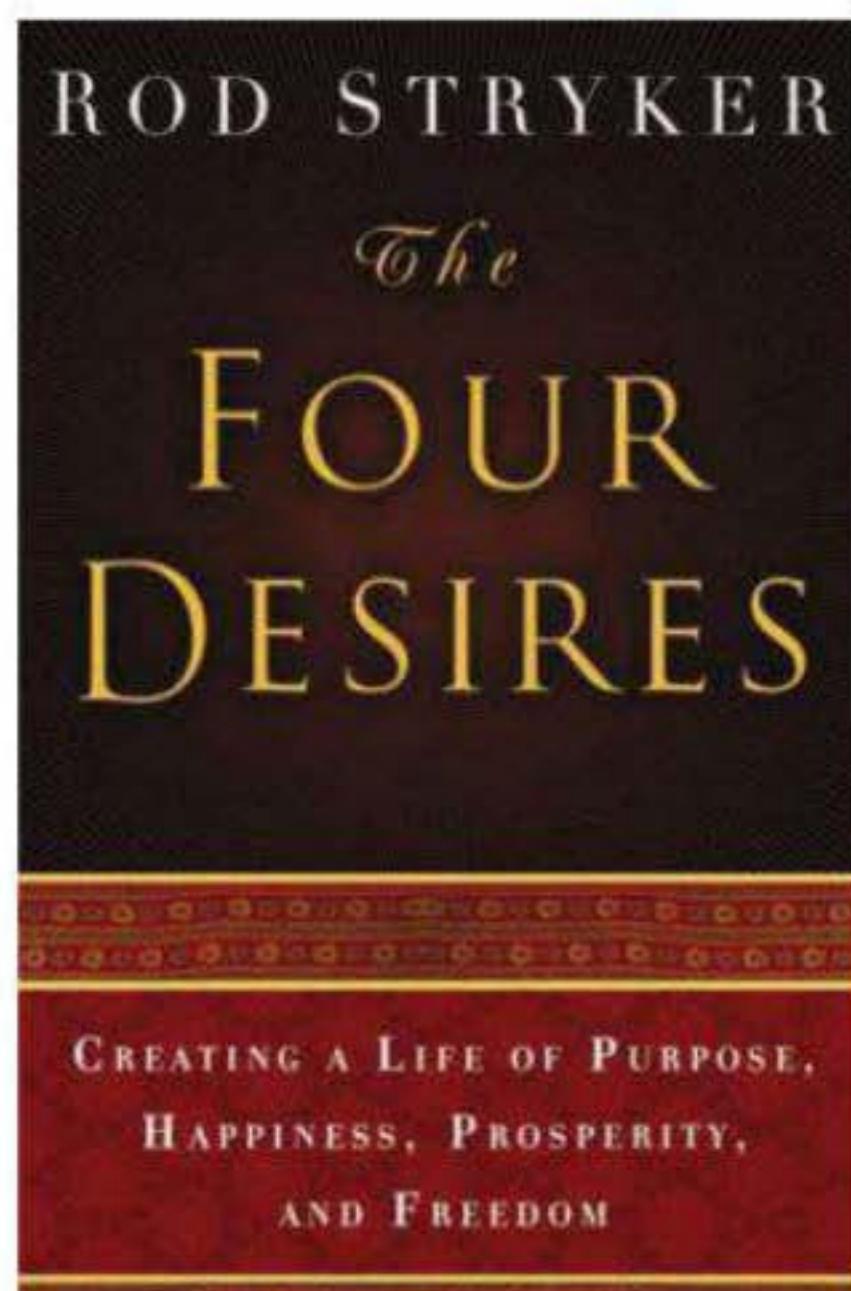
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Yoga teacher Kathryn Budig photographed by Jasper Johal

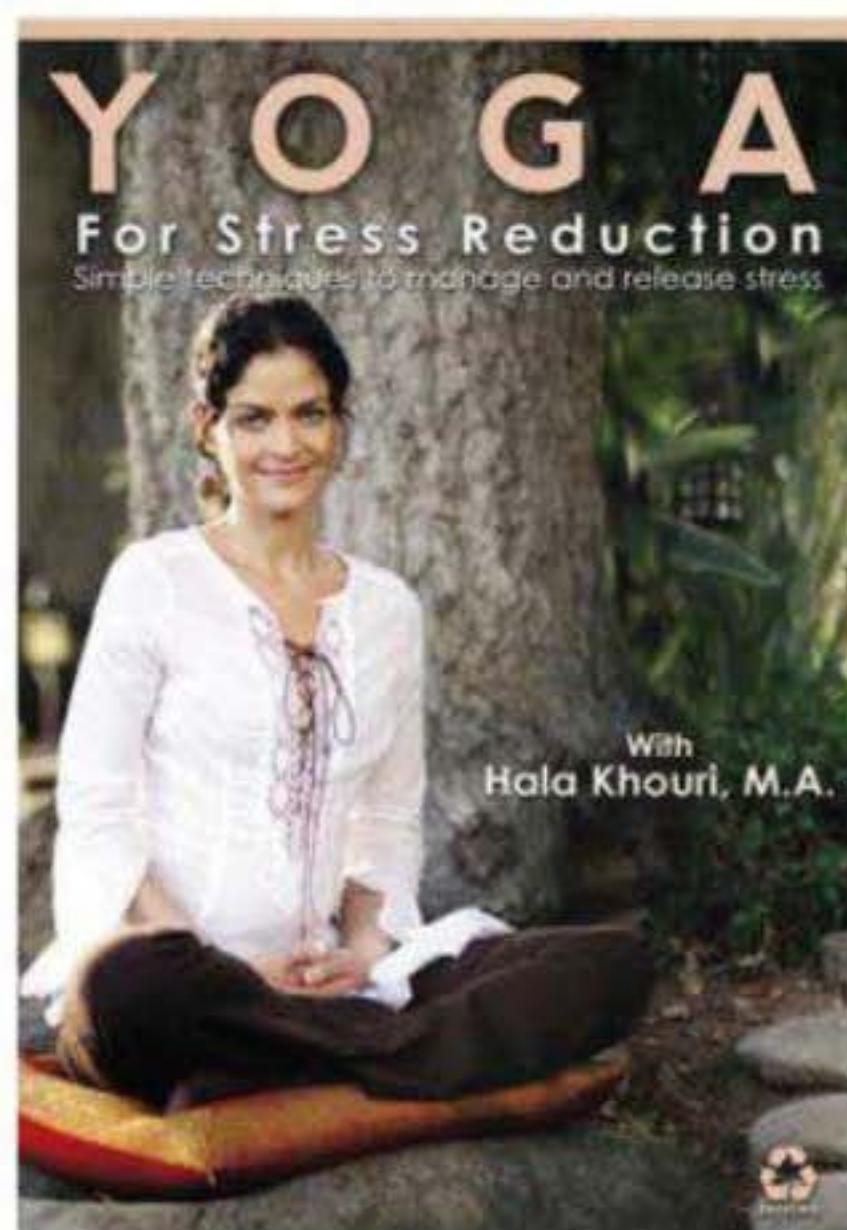
media


BOOK THE FOUR DESIRES:

Creating a Life of Purpose, Happiness, Prosperity, and Freedom, by Rod Stryker.

Delacorte Press; bantamdell.com

Desire gets a negative rap in some spiritual circles, perhaps because it's been known to motivate some pretty bad behavior. But as Para-Yoga founder Rod Stryker explains in his new book, *The Four Desires*, it's also the only force we have for good. Based on the purusharthas, or four aims of life, his book deftly outlines the essence of the human



condition and explains how to work with our desires—instead of against them—to find long-lasting happiness in both the material and the spiritual realm.

Stryker presents a coherent set of Tantric teachings and practices designed to lead you straight to your heart's desires. It's an appealing destination, although for many of us the path to self-fulfillment is a treacherous one; we can't make the journey without traversing our own canyons of despair, confusion, ennui, anger, and regret. Stryker serves as a marvelous guide, one who teaches us not only how to progress on the path, but also how to light our own way. His writing is engaging and even entertaining—and he proves a deft storyteller, drawing on his own experience and real-life stories from his students to underscore the importance of desire in all its forms.

You'll need to take time with this book, not just to read it but also to do the work that is outlined in each of the accompanying exercises, which are in-depth approaches to svadhyaya (self-discovery) and can't be rushed. But the rewards are worth your while. *The Four Desires* will give you a road map for your spiritual journey—and for the ups and downs of everyday life, too. **HILLARI DOWDLE**

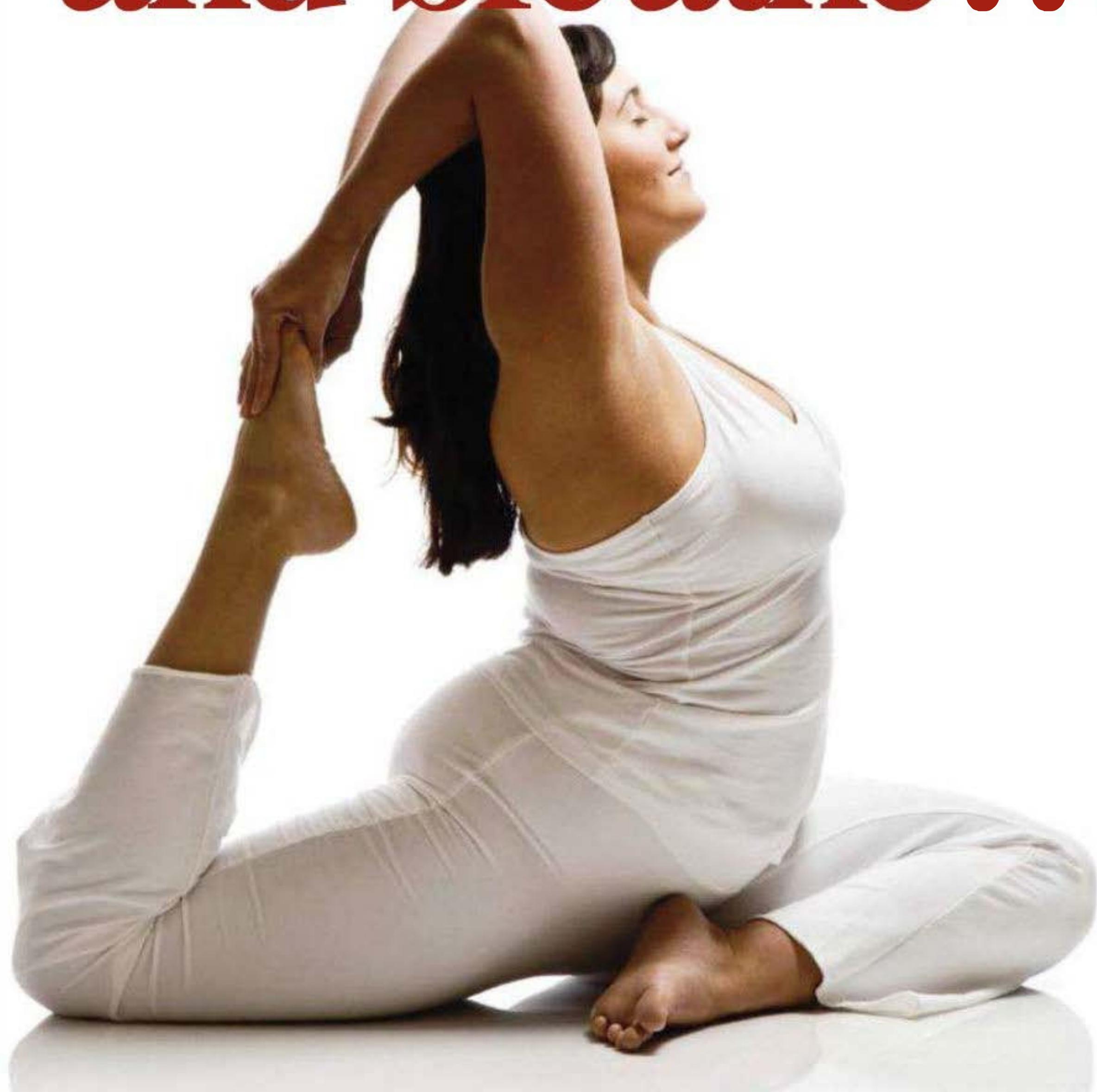
CD REMIXES, by Donna

De Lory, White Swan Records; whiteswanrecords.com

The mantra-music artist Donna De Lory's new album, *Remixes*, is a stunning blend of English lyrics and Sanskrit mantras set to dreamy soundscapes and driving dance beats—and it's sure to be embraced by the ever-expanding yoga tribe.

The collection features remixed, reinvented dance and down-tempo versions of much-loved tracks from three of her previous devotional albums: *The Lover & the Beloved*, *Sky Is Open*, and *Sanctuary*. World electronica artists and remix masters like Atom Smith, Eastern Sun, and Desert Dwellers take De Lory's luminous vocals to new heights with soaring melodies and hypnotic rhythms. She collaborated with her longtime production partner, Mac Quayle (Sting, Madonna, Christina Aguilera), on the passionate "He Ma Durga" and the dance-club-worthy hits "Sky Is Open" and "Aham Prema"; she worked with producer Dave Dale (*Garden State*) to create an extended remix of "Sanctuary" ▶

and breathe . . .



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» and an exquisite acoustic rendering of “*Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu*.”

De Lory’s conscious and positive pop take on kirtan is appealing to music lovers who are unfamiliar with mantra and bhakti yoga (the yoga of devotion), and it will transport experienced kirtan lovers to new states of ecstasy. Remixes’ spiritually infused music will no doubt get you up and dancing—and it can inspire peace and gratitude anywhere, anytime.

KATHERINE RAE

DVD YOGA FOR STRESS REDUCTION: *Simple Techniques to Manage and Release Stress*, with Hala Khouri. Hala Yoga Health & Media; halakhouri.com

According to the yoga teacher and somatic therapist Hala Khouri, the best way to manage stress is not by thinking or talking about it, but by physically releasing it from the body. Her new video—a six-part practice that features yoga postures, simple stretches, and somatic therapy techniques—aims to do just that.

After introducing us to diaphragmatic breathing and mindful movement, Khouri offers a standing sequence that is designed to help us feel safe and grounded; a free-movement section that explains how to “discharge” (a somatic therapy term for releasing physical tension that’s stored in the body); and a section that features simple, long-held seated postures. Two short, useful meditations focus on the somatic therapy concepts of “tracking sensation” (following bodily sensations with the mind, as a way of staying present) and “resourcing” (focusing on a place in the body that feels strong and safe, as an anchor in stressful situations).

Khouri’s slow-paced sequence features simple poses and Sanskrit-free instruction, and is a boon for beginners. Viewers will appreciate her lovely, strong presence, and her practice facilitates a grounded, calmer frame of mind. KAREN MACKLIN

BOOK MY BODY IS A TEMPLE: Yoga as a Path to Wholeness, by Christina Sell. Hohm Press; hohmpress.com

In her new book, Anusara Yoga teacher Christina Sell—a longtime student of the late spiritual teacher Lee Lozowick—uses

the story of how Lozowick’s guru (Yogi Ramsuratkumar) built a temple as a metaphor for how we can build a successful yoga practice from the ground up.

Although *My Body Is a Temple* incorporates elements of memoir, it’s a how-to book for dedicating oneself to the yogic path, using Indian wisdom and metaphorical insights about various asanas to address life’s spiritual quandaries. Chock full of quotes from Lozowick, Anusara founder John Friend, and Sell’s yoga philosophy teacher, Carlos Pomedá (among many others)—this tome covers both practical and philosophical matters, ranging from asana as sacred art and mantra practice to wise eating and ethical decision making.

While her insights are framed by many philosophical systems, she leans heavily on Tantra and classical yoga (as outlined in the *Yoga Sutra*). She encourages reflection by including talking points at the end of each chapter, and, as a result, she has created a profoundly contemplative—and conversational—book for the modern yogi. ERIC SHAW

CD LET YOUR HEART BE KNOWN,

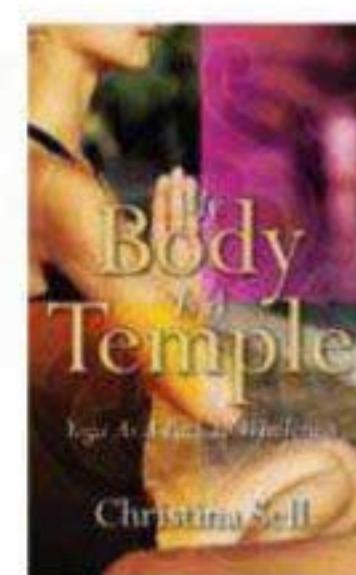
by Steve Gold. EarthTones; earthtones.org

Singer-songwriter Steve Gold’s new album, *Let Your Heart Be Known*, is a soulful addition to the ever-expanding genre of yoga music. His spiritually inspired English lyrics—blended with Vedic man-



tras, acoustic-guitar melodies, and West African-influenced rhythms—carry healing vibrations. And his folksy, bluesy voice is sweetened with the honeyed backup vocals of his wife, Anne-Émilie Gold.

This is a genre-bending album that, on occasion, blends the sacred and profane. Take the song “Stoned on Shiva,” for example—an innovative blues tune featuring an Om namah shivaya chant and old blues lyrics like “It stoned me, whoa-oh, it stoned me.” On a higher note, Gold includes two versions of the title track:



going away can be the first step toward coming home.

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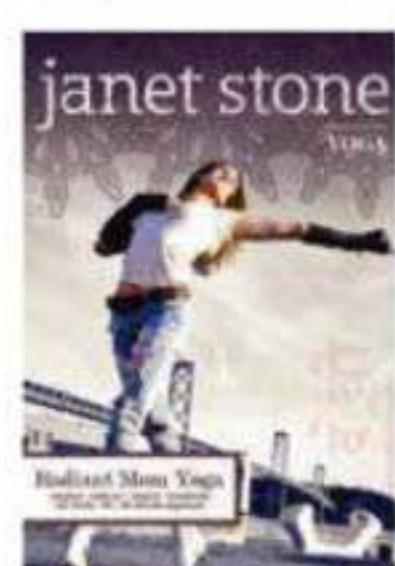
The first is an emotional, acoustic plea to know God; the second sounds like a luscious, electronic promise. A reassuring lullaby called “There Is a Light” blends the Paramjyoti mantra with a sweet, profound message of faith: “There is a light that never goes out.”

Deeply influenced by the blues of the Mississippi Delta, American spirituals, and his own practice, Gold describes his style as an ‘Americana acoustic-guitar approach’ to devotional music. All genres and labels aside, *Let Your Heart Be Known* is a heartfelt offering to love in its purest form. **KATHERINE RAE**

DVD **RADIANT MOM YOGA**, by Janet Stone. Janet Stone Yoga; janetsstoneyoga.com In her new video, *Radiant Mom Yoga*, vinyasa flow teacher (and mother of two) Janet Stone invites women who are caring for their babies and young children to take time out to nourish themselves so that they can nurture their family more effectively—and joyfully.

The high-quality, beautifully filmed DVD features two practices (a 20-minute flow and a 40-minute sequence), both of which are designed to soothe those sore shoulders, aching wrists, and tight necks that women often grapple with when they’re nursing and carrying toddlers, while also strengthening their core.

Stone’s creative variations on the Sun Salutation are designed to make her students sweat. Her targeted abdominal



work helps new (and not so new) moms regain strength and vitality in their midsection after childbirth, and she offers safe variations for women who have had cesarean sections. A series of incrementally intense backbends encourages tense upperbacks and shoulders to strengthen and release, while hip work and a short relaxation round out the two practices.

Stone radiates warmth, strength, and understanding in this video, and the message that she delivers to us is crystal clear: Take a break from caregiving and rejuvenate yourself with a nurturing—yet

sweetly dynamic—yoga practice that will make you simply radiant. **JESSICA BERGER GROSS**

BOOK **SACRED JEWELS OF YOGA: Wisdom from India’s Beloved Scriptures, Teachers, Masters, and Monks**, compiled and edited by Dave DeLuca. New World Library; newworldlibrary.com

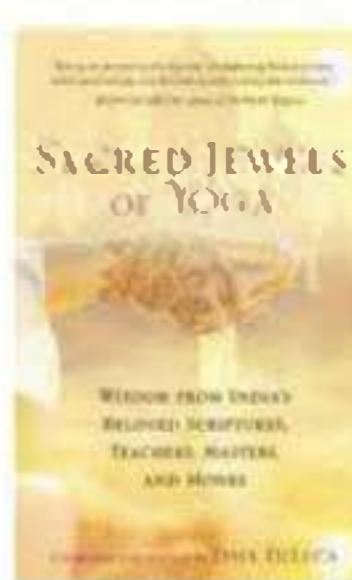
Looking for some inspiration for your yoga practice—and your life? The new book *Sacred Jewels of Yoga*, by the Vedanta teacher Dave DeLuca, is a “greatest hits” compilation of passages culled from

the rich trove of India’s wisdom tradition—and a thought-provoking introduction to yoga’s philosophical underpinnings. It functions best as a coffee-table book or bedside companion, to be close at hand when you’re craving spiritual succor:

DeLuca has published other books on Swami Vivekananda, who brought yoga to the West in the late 1800s, and leans heavily on the Hindu guru here. The saint’s bold statements, such as “Think always: I am Brahman, I am the Infinite Spirit,” are arranged next to sacred teachings by Vivekananda’s teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, and gentle quotes from the Yoga Sutra, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other, lesser-known scriptures. Each passage is presented like an altar—midpage, surrounded by white space, encouraging contemplation. *Sacred Jewels of Yoga* is an invaluable introduction to the teachings of yoga and an illuminating guide for seekers from all walks of life. **ERIC SHAW**

CD **THE YOGA SESSIONS: Go-Ray & Duke**, by Go-Ray and Duke. Yoga Organix/White Swan; whiteswanrecords.com

With this highly innovative yoga music mix, “devotional dub” masters David ‘Duke Mushroom’ Schommer and Rachel ‘Go-Ray’ Golnb explore the rhythms and melodies of South Asian spiritual music with a sweet and heart-centered dose of



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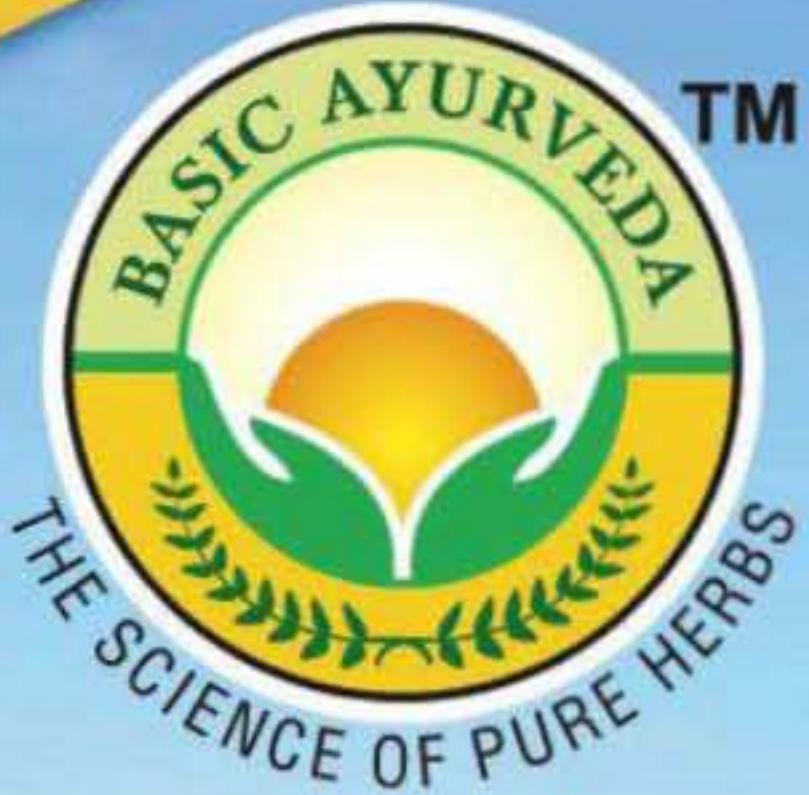
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creativity. Featuring lyrics that are sung in eight languages and devotion demonstrated in six religions, the album truly celebrates the sacred in all forms.

Go-Ray and Duke reinterpret a Hindu bhajan (devotional hymn) that served as a popular anthem for Gandhi's movement; an ode to Saraswati in "Goddess Invocation"; Sufi poetry in tracks like "Chaap Tilak"; and lines from a Buddhist scripture in "Mangalam." Yoga teacher and rapper MC Yogi lends his unique blend of bhakti (devotion) and hip-hop to an Om namah shivaya chant titled "Bolo Bolo," while bansuri flute maestro Steve Gorn, tabla player Naren Budhakar, and guitarist Shahar Mintz make appearances on other entrancing tracks.

Go-Ray's voice is simply hypnotic, and Duke plays drums that channel Nataraaja, the Hindu lord of the dance, himself. This album is a great fit for asana practice and a delightful soundtrack for everyday life, because it bathes even the most mundane activities in the light of divine love.

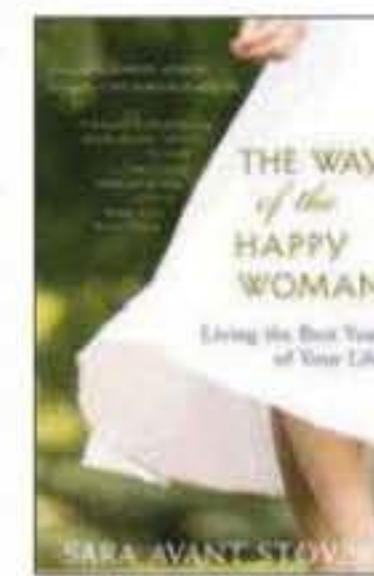
KATHERINE RAE

BOOK THE WAY OF THE HAPPY

WOMAN: Living the Best Year of Your Life, by Sara Avant Stover: New World Library; newworldlibrary.com

Twelve years ago, a cancer scare forced Sara Avant Stover to examine the disparity between her seemingly healthy outer life (as a 21-year-old vegan, yoga practitioner, and straight-A student) and the inner torment she was experiencing as she struggled with Type A perfectionism and a host of health issues ranging from insomnia to bulimia. *The Way of the Happy Woman* is the positive self-help product of Sara's own healing journey, which began when she moved to Thailand, tuned in to the rhythms of nature, and started using yoga, Thai Yoga Massage, and other healing modalities to bring her body and mind into balance.

The book is organized around the seasons to support a woman's return to natural rhythms. Each section includes



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journaling exercises, illustrated yin and yang yoga practices, meditations, and self-reflections designed to help the reader rediscover her innate feminine wisdom. Stover addresses physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual issues related to each season according to the teachings of traditional Chinese medicine and provides an abundance of delicious, healthful recipes. Heartfelt and rich with personal stories, this book presents practical wisdom for women of all ages who are seeking to live a healthier, happier life. JANICE GATES

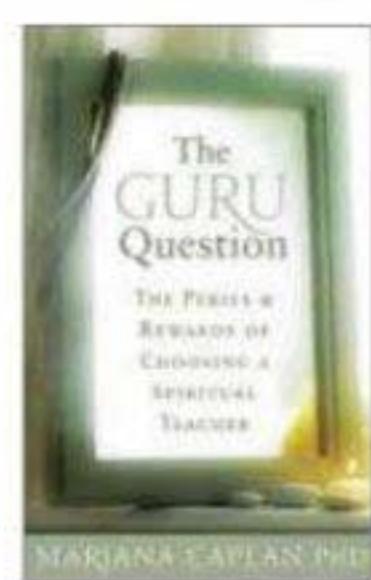
BOOK THE GURU QUESTION:

The Perils and Rewards of Choosing a Spiritual Teacher, by Mariana Caplan. Sounds True; soundtrue.com

The guru-disciple relationship is a work in progress in the West, and although there is good writing on the subject, it's rare. Award-winning author Mariana Caplan, a psychotherapist and professor of yogic and transpersonal psychologies, fills the gap by creating an in-depth, practical guide about how to choose—and stay with—an authentic spiritual teacher.

She dives into the deepest, most provocative issues about guru discipleship—from the nature of “spiritual scandals” to the importance of having a spiritual teacher; from the pros and cons of working with just one teacher versus several to ways to practice “conscious discipleship” and accept a teacher’s imperfections—and she’s qualified to address them because she’s made plenty of mistakes on her own spiritual journey.

Throughout the book, Caplan shares her dramatic (and, at times, naïve) history of surrender to both good and evil mystics, shamans, teachers, and gurus. Her warnings are drawn from personal



experience—yet her inspiring stories of self-transformation fulfill the promise that authentic guru-devotion holds, once you know how to avoid the danger zones.

If you’re searching for a spiritual teacher, this book will sharpen your valor with a unique course in spiritual discernment. ERIC SHAW

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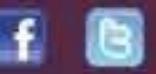
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heavenly rest

continued from page 88

Scientists and health professionals are now recognizing Savasana's worth, but its value to busy people (like me and probably you, too) has long been acknowledged by yoga teachers. Aadil Palkhivala, the founder of Purna Yoga Centers in Bellevue, Washington, relates that back in the late 1960s, his mother, a prominent lawyer in Mumbai, approached B.K.S. Iyengar to find a time-efficient yoga program. "She said to Iyengar, 'I don't have time to do a whole routine. What are the most important poses I need to do?'" Palkhivala says. "Iyengar's answer for her was, Two minutes Headstand, five minutes Shoulderstand, and Savasana for as long as you can.'"

Palkhivala hastens to add that this was not Iyengar's universal prescription for optimal practice. The abbreviated three-asana regimen, he says, was specifically designed for his mother to practice "only during her busiest periods. On weekends, she did a full practice." Still, Iyengar's inclusion of Savasana in this three-pose sequence suggests its overall importance.

★ no napping, please

Apparently, it's not uncommon for students to undervalue or misunderstand Corpse Pose. "I have students who try to sneak out the door just as Savasana is beginning," says John Friend, the founder of Anusara Yoga, based in The Woodlands, Texas. "They feel vulnerable lying still for 5 or 10 minutes." Others see it as siesta time or, oddly, time for a quick postpractice nap. "I have another student who falls asleep immediately," he says. "He just drops off like a rock."

But this master teacher educates his students around the world to understand that Savasana is not synonymous with napping or checking out in any way. In fact, it is just the opposite. This seemingly simple pose can lead, Friend says, to the "experience of ultimate freedom."

At its best, Savasana offers an opportunity to experience liberation—the freedom that comes when you release the ties that bind you to the external world. In such a moment, you free yourself to experience the Self beyond the limits of your

own personal story of joy and suffering. In Savasana, Friend says, "The spirit, the very essence of our being, is not clinging or caught in the physical realm."

★ Corpse Pose Uncovered

In his book *The Deeper Dimensions of Yoga*, yoga historian Georg Feuerstein notes that Savasana(also spelled "shavasana" or "shava-asana") is discussed in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, a 14th-century manual considered to be one of the seminal texts of yoga. In the Pradipika, Savasana is touted for helping to ward off fatigue and to achieve mental repose.

According to Feuerstein, Corpse Pose "combines inner stillness with high energy, thus perfectly symbolizing the essence of yoga." He reflects on the yogis of old, ascetics who renounced worldly possessions. On the outside, these loin-clothed renunciants may have looked like the "walking dead," but as Feuerstein puts it, they were "full of life on the inside."

In modern times, perhaps this is what happens in Savasana: We allow ourselves to die a little bit—we let go of our worldly personas and our endless worries and to-do lists—and just connect with the source of life within.

Back in Massapequa, New York, people tend to think of dead bodies as being... well, dead. The name of this pose could be one reason it's misunderstood. "Corpse" is an unfortunate translation," says Richard Rosen, a *Yoga Journal* contributing editor and co-founder, with Rodney Yee, of the Piedmont Yoga Studio in Oakland, California. "To us, that means a dead body. Indians have a different take. The way they understand it, this 'corpse' is physically inert, but very observant." And that's exactly the state this pose helps us achieve—tranquil mindfulness.

Since "Observant Dead Person" Pose or "Deceased on the Outside but Still Rockin' on the Inside" Pose are not likely to catch on as new names for this asana, "Corpse" Pose it shall probably stay. But as yogis, we can't let the morbid appellation disguise what is truly a vital part of a yoga practice.

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Center in Houston, exercise physiologist Bill Baun recognizes Savasana as a form of mindful meditation. Thus, he sees it as extremely valuable, whether it's for helping the doctors and staff at one of the country's leading cancer centers deal with the stresses of jobs that often involve life-and-death situations, or for calming someone feeling a bit frazzled after a tough morning with the kids.

"These periods of deep relaxation allow you to step away from what I call the monkey chatter—the ongoing conversation you have with yourself—or from the boss that screamed at you an hour ago or from whatever else is going on in your life," Baun says. You then take that quiet "alert restfulness" back with you to face the world. "This is why it's important that the teacher brings you back to the present at the end of the session," Baun says. "Because you can then step back into your life, reenergized and revitalized." You can handle stressful situations more effectively and with less reactivity because you are aware, unhurried, and tranquil.

★ an antidote to stress

Yogapractitioner Tina M. Penhollow, who teaches the science of exercise at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, notes that Savasana helps to improve focus and concentration. She believes the pose can be beneficial for those who suffer from anxiety, stress, and insomnia.

Despite its many benefits for body and mind, more than a few practitioners still view Savasana as an afterthought, the yogic equivalent of the cool-down in an aerobic workout—ideal if you have time but not essential. Also, boring.

"I know that to many students it's not the most exciting thing to do," Rosen says. "But think of shaking a snow globe. You set it down on the table, and in a little while the snow settles back down over the houses and trees." Savasana, according to Rosen, is the settler of yoga. "Everything gets stirred up during asana practice, and you need to settle it back down. That's why it's a good way to end practice."

Some modern schools of yoga take this pose very seriously. Practitioners of Sivananda Yoga begin a 90-minute class with

Savasana—to relax the body and prepare the mind for the work ahead. They also include it between the postures (allowing the breath to circulate freely and to both invigorate the nervous system and protect it from overstimulation) and then again at the end of practice, to bring the yogi back into balance.

"It gives a wonderful sense of calm," says Swami Sadasivananda, director of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center in New York City. "Savasana is an important time for students to assimilate all the benefits from the practice of asanas. During Savasana there is a complete recharge and rejuvenation of the body, mind, and spirit."

going deep

Palkhivala would agree, because he views Corpse Pose as a deeply profound experience. "This is when you can allow your body to relax, so there are no aches and pains, no tensions. It is at this time you can start doing the real yoga."

The real yoga, he explains, is the "act of union," between your "self with a small s, your ego, and your Self with a capital S, the spirit." Because you're encouraged to release your mind's occupation with the distractions of daily life, "Savasana is conducive to making that connection."

Of course, simply assuming Corpse Pose will not make the connection between the small-self and the capital-S Self for you. But one of yoga's promises is that if you live your life with the intention and devotion to closely observe yourself with as much honesty as you can, the union of self and Self can truly be forged. Savasana creates the space for that quiet reflective inquiry and that union.

I admit that my ego is far from integrated with spirit: My male ego in class eagerly shows off my proficiency in Plank and Chaturanga, the only two poses I'm convinced that I can do "better" than my female classmates, who are far more flexible and adept than I am. Still, even though I'm far from perfect, I can feel perfectly at peace in Savasana. We all can.

get physical

In addition to the mental gains to be had, there are real physical benefits to Savasana,

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too. Feuerstein cites a study done in India in the '60s that demonstrated that regular practice of Corpse Pose could be effective in combating hypertension. It reportedly took patients about three weeks to "adequately learn" Savasana. (Again, with the learning and improving!) So it seems that, despite my flippant attitude toward the idea of "learning" this pose, it requires a proper technique, just as much as Down Dog or any of the other seemingly more active asanas.

★ savasana dos and don'ts

Savasana's success starts not within instruction, but location: "You want a place that is quiet, somewhat dark...a place that is comfortable yet stable," Friend says. These conditions will help foster what he calls "an internal drawing in and settling" that helps clear the decks for the Savasana voyage.

Then comes a careful positioning of your body. Savasana, I discovered, is not just lying on the floor. What's really important for a good Savasana is to lie in a

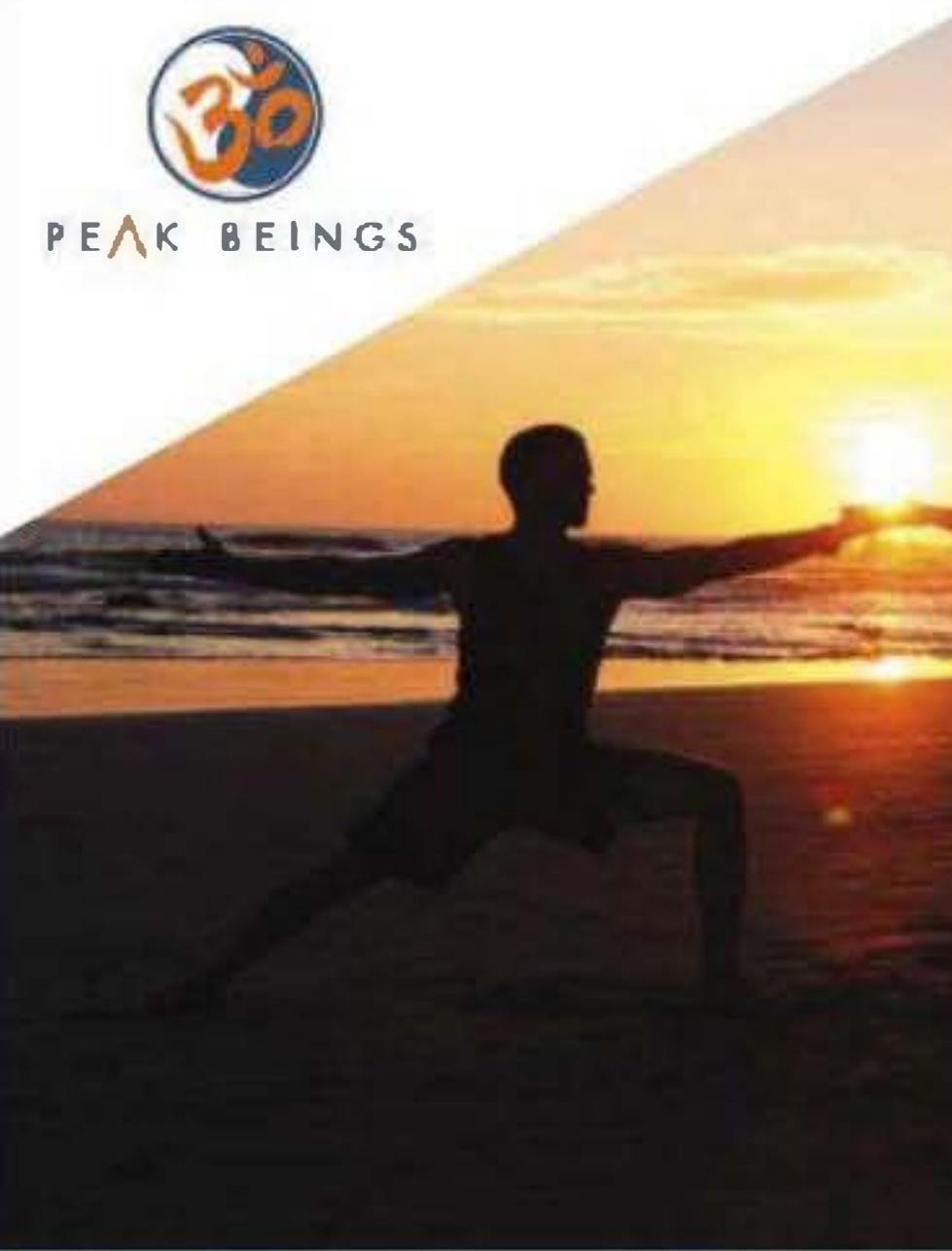
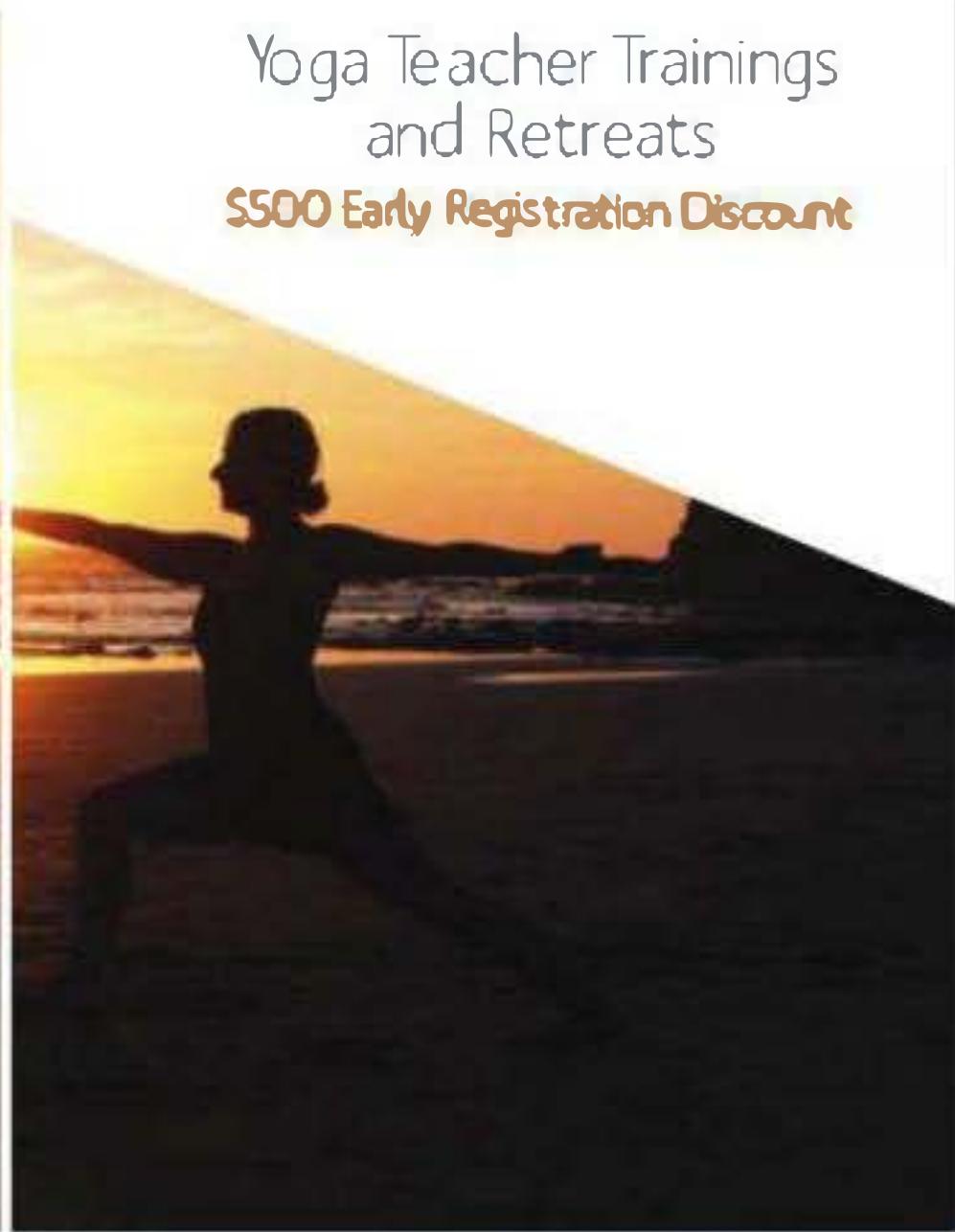
neutral position," says Rosen. "Your head should lie square and equidistant from each shoulder." Arms should be by your sides, at a 45-degree angle relative to the torso. This keeps your shoulders loose and your breathing unrestricted. That means lying in a straight line, with your arms or legs not tilted or bent to one side, your head not drooping. "Stay in line as much as possible," suggests Palkhivala. "Energy flows in smooth lines. So if your head is crooked, your pelvis is tilted to one side, and your body looks like a serpent, the energy won't flow."

Are you comfortable? Straight, balanced, and relaxed as you lie on the floor of a dark, still room? Wonderful. Now comes the real work and pleasure of Savasana. "This is the time to go inside and find the spirit within," Palkhivala says.

Good luck, if you're anything like me.

"It's hard to stop the mind from wandering," Rosen concedes. "You have to continuously back off from your thoughts, from the stream of consciousness. Try to withdraw and look at them from above."


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★ 1000 ways to die

The Savasana experience can be as diverse as the yogis who teach it. Maria, my teacher at Om Tara, creates a warm and comfortable atmosphere for Savasana in our Thursday classes. She draws the blinds, drapes us with blankets, places eye pillows on us, and after about five to eight minutes of darkness and silence, she gently guides us back from the inward experience of Corpse Pose to a full awareness of the room around us.

Jeff Logan, a certified intermediate level I Iyengar teacher, does it a bit differently at his studio, Body & Soul Fitness & Yoga Center in Huntington, New York. Savasana with him is peaceful but not quiet. He talks the class through Savasana in a way that is relaxing and, in the end, profound. Once everyone is corpselike, he begins to speak in a soothing voice. He has students scan their bodies, systematically releasing tension from jaws, arms, hands, abdomen, and legs. (As a marathon runner whose every muscle is often tight, fatigued, and holding on to yesterday's

run, I'm grateful for this!) He has us relax our eyes into their sockets and encourages us to "let go" of our tongue, ears, and skin.

As he guides us from our internal experience back to the room around us, Jeff asks each of us to lie in a fetal position—"Like a newborn," he says. After he brings us up into a seated position, he invites us to open our eyes and greet the world around us like a reborn child.

This idea of Corpse Pose as a symbolic rebirth is intriguing. In Jeff's class, I ran with it. Like an infant, what I wanted to do now was eat. So, having thought about nothing, I started to calmly observe that I was thinking about lunch. Having successfully been a fidget-free corpse, I was ready to go about my day as an even more fully functioning, self-observing, live human being... with a little help from a well-done Savasana.

John Hanc writes for Newsday in New York and is a contributing editor to Runner's World magazine. He recently published his eighth book, *The Coolest Race on Earth*.

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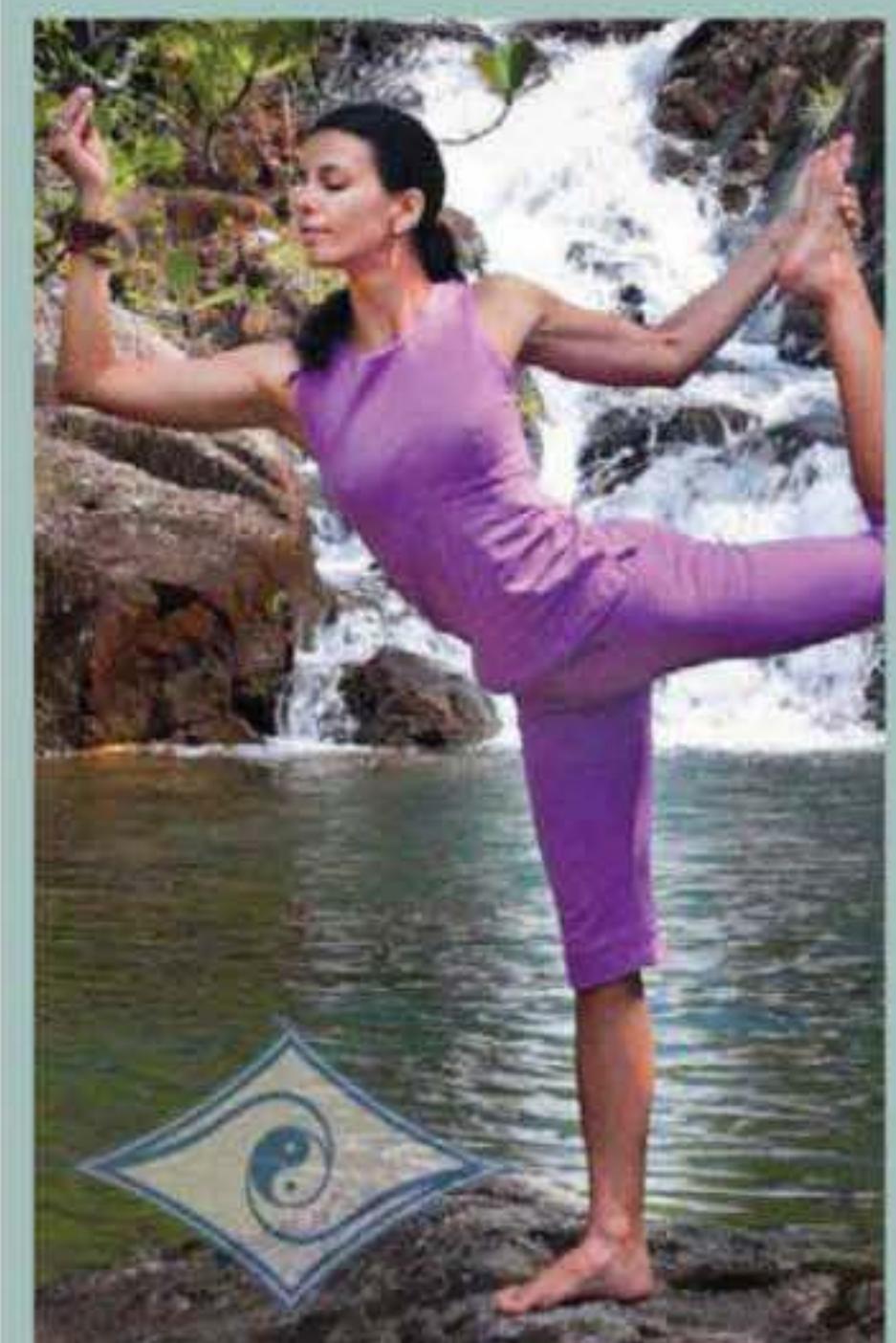
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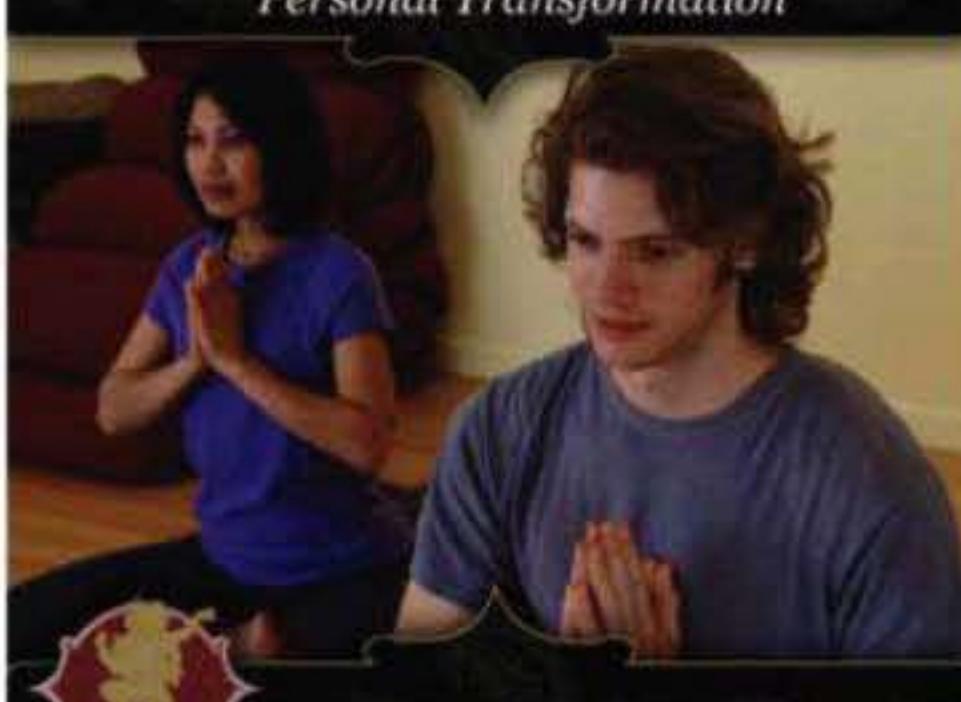
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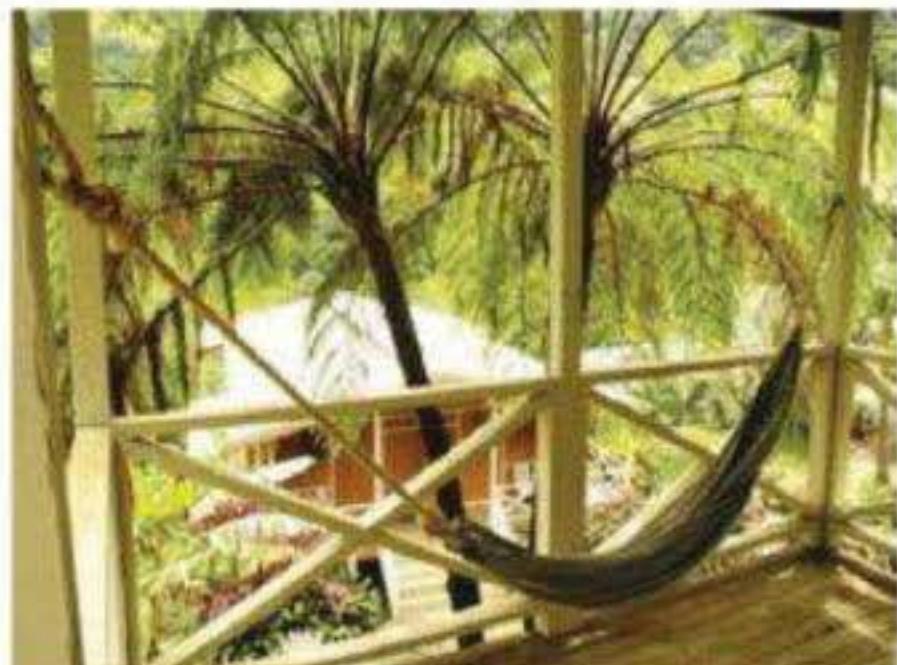


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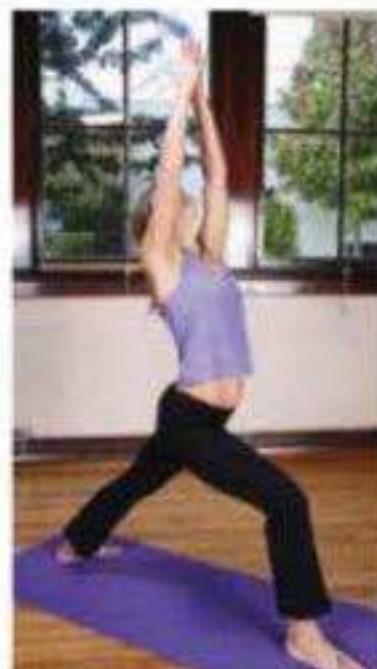
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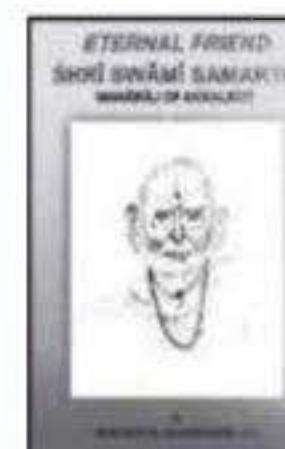


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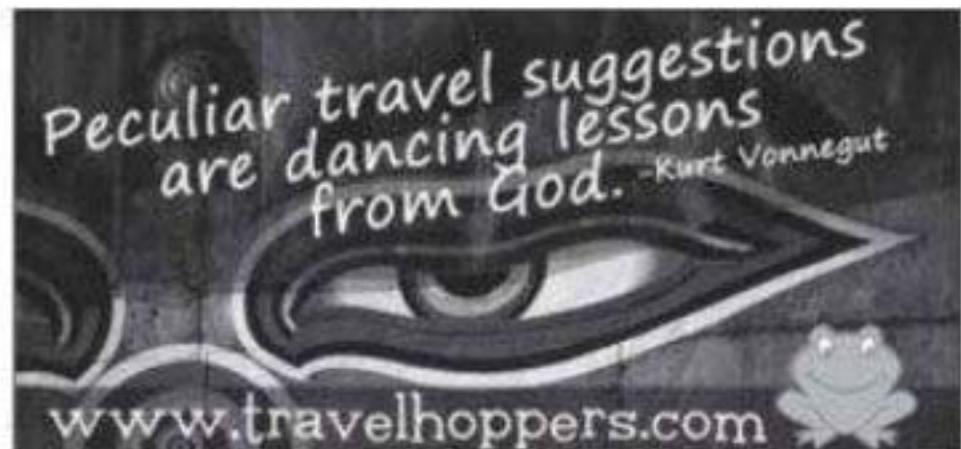
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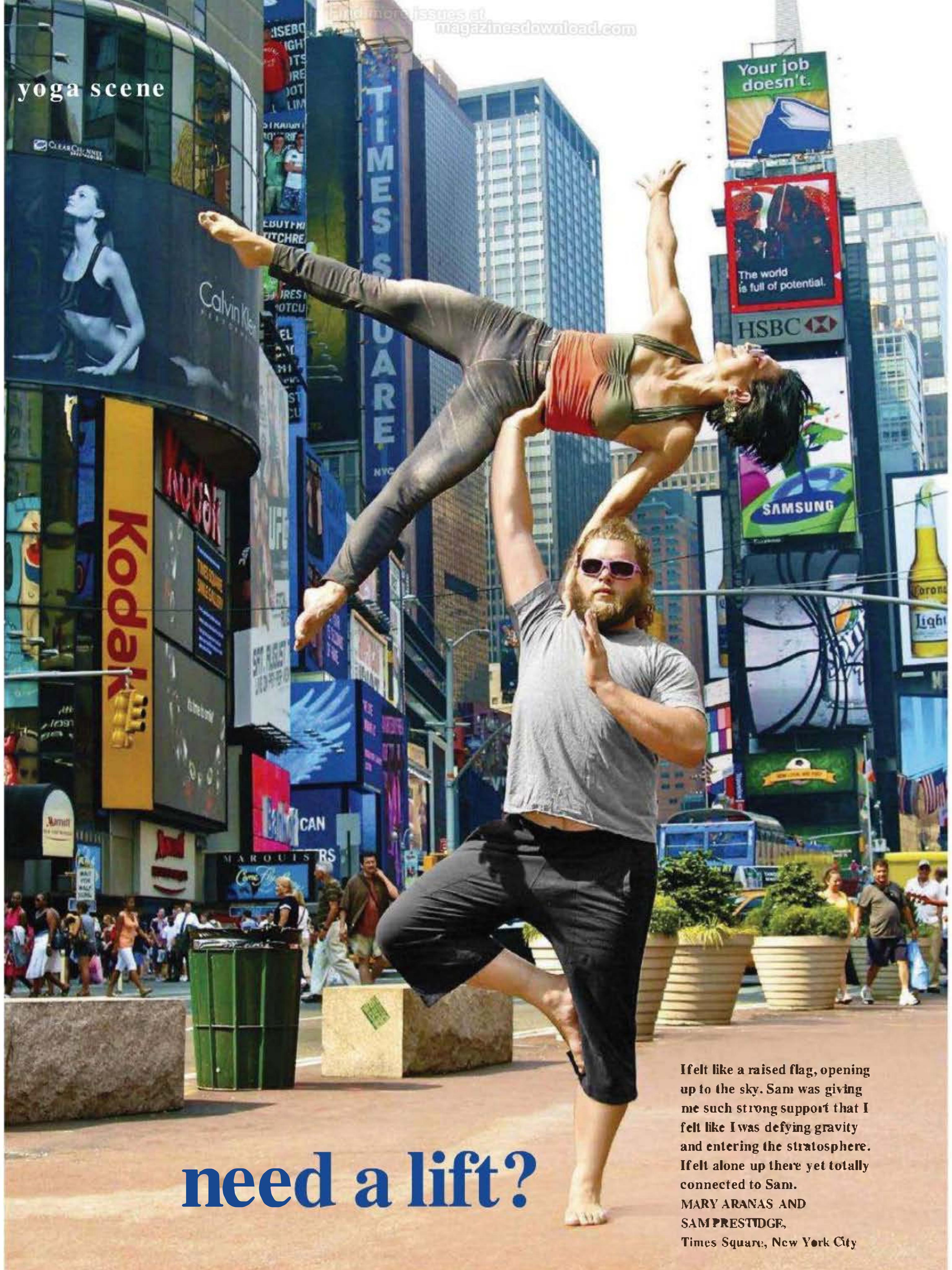


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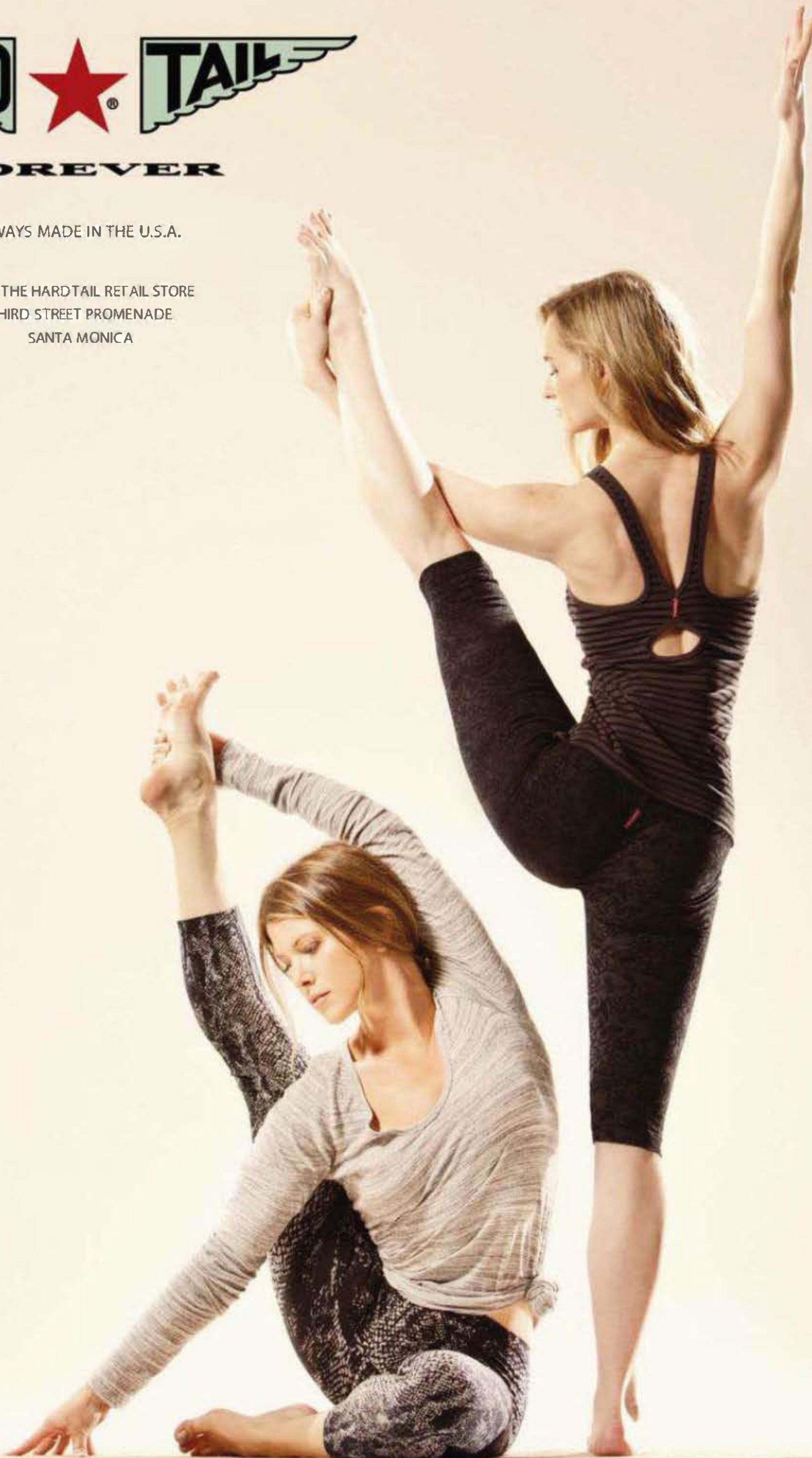
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