

## Relax Under the Palm Trees at Sunset Yoga in Plant Park



By Madison O'Hara October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023

In what ways can we relax our minds while focusing on our body and its movements? How can we show up for our mind, self and body? Is this even possible?

On Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup> I, along with many other students, made my way to Plant Park on the University of Tampa's campus for sunset yoga hosted by Alternative and Natural Explorations in Wellness (ANEW). We each laid out our yoga mats and escaped into a relaxing realm all while watching the sun set behind us.

Being a part of this event is easy. Students can check the InvoletUT application to stay updated on when yoga will be hosted. Kim, an officer of Alternative and Natural Explorations in Wellness (ANEW), said "we also post a lot of information on Instagram, which is what I am in charge of".

What is nice about this event is that you do not have to RSVP. If you can make it, you can make it. If not, there are plenty more times to come.

I wanted to understand the background of this organization. I asked one of the officers, Kim, how this came about. She said "the goal is really about health and wellness; we host events outside of yoga that just promote overall health and wellbeing."

The turnout was great. October is a stressful time during the school year as most students are studying and taking midterms. The burnout is real. I felt worried that I would not be able to fully focus as I had so many other things running through my mind, but rest assured, the instructor was very engaging and made us all feel relaxed.

After speaking to an attendee named Ally, she said "this experience really helped ground me. It was a nice escape from all the schoolwork I have been doing".

Most students need to escape from school for a moment. We tend to get caught up in all the things we have going on. Typically, students are inside doing work and studying. It is nice to get outside, get some fresh air and put your mind elsewhere.

The weather here in Tampa is getting much cooler at night, making it the perfect environment for outside activities. It is hard to be outside and do activities in the heat of the day, around sunset is the perfect time for an event like this. The frequent gust of wind was nice and refreshing throughout the session.

Yoga connects your mind and body. It is a healthy way for us to relax and focus on ourselves. You will find that most people who do yoga have the same health values as one another. It is not about an intense workout; it is about connecting our mind and our body. Surrounding ourselves with people who want to bring a calm and controlled vibe into their life can in return make you feel like you are in a stress-free environment.

Think about it, being on a college campus that is active with students from the hours of 7am all the way to 10pm is chaotic. It is almost like New York City for example. The city never sleeps and sometimes when you are in college, it can feel that way too.

I was curious if the same or different people attend this organizations events. Kim said “we see a lot of new faces and some of the same. This year we have seen a lot of freshmen attend our events”. I think this is due to the stress of being a freshman in a new place with all new people. They definitely need to decompress.

Sunset yoga can be done with friends you have already met or new friends that you may meet at yoga. It is an experience for yourself, while also introducing you to new people who may have similar values as you.

Attendee Ally said “I don’t attend yoga frequently. I have gone to a few sessions at the gym but after attending this session outside, it was a whole new vibe. I definitely want to come more often. It helps a lot with my stress levels”.

The University of Tampa has many organizations and events to offer students. It is about what speaks to you! You do not have to be an expert at yoga in order to attend.

I was worried that I was not experienced enough, but it’s for all levels. If there was a position that was hard for me to do, the instructor gave alternatives which was very helpful.

You can be experienced, or inexperienced. You will learn as time goes on.

I was also wondering if the officers who run this organization feel rewarded after hosting mindfulness and wellness activities. Kim said, “it definitely is rewarding, knowing that you are helping someone decompress in a healthy way is a good feeling”.

I learned that Alternative and Natural Explorations in Wellness (ANEW) does more than just yoga. They hold events like movie night, bracelet building, markets, art, and so much more. I am very interested in attending more events as I was not initially aware that there were more options.

If wellness is important to you, this organization is fantastic. The people were friendly and accepting and the environment was calm and relaxing.

Sunset yoga in plant park was a huge hit. I even learned a lot from not only a yoga standpoint, but I learned about why others attend and about the instructors. Plant Park is a great place to relax and take a breather.

Make sure you do something for yourself, especially during times of stress and anxiety. You are never alone and when attending these organizations, you will find that so many others feel the same way!

You can go to involve UT to find more events or ANEWUT on Instagram to see pictures and learn more about upcoming events that are being hosted. I can promise that you won't want to miss another opportunity to relax under the palm trees at sunset yoga in Plant Park.