

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

Valley yoga instructor Jyoti Weaver, of Yoga Illuminations in Scottsdale, talks everything yoga: from the benefits of personal well-being and different yogi techniques to common practice misconceptions, we asked away!

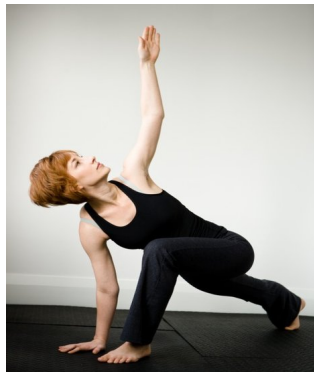


What inspired you to become a yoga instructor?

I took my first yoga class in college in 1977 and just enjoyed it. In 1979 during my internship for therapeutic recreation, I adapted and taught a yoga class for seniors in wheelchairs (long before yoga was even thought of being therapeutic) focusing on breath, balance, stretching and mental focus. My career took me in another direction for a few years until about 9 years ago an event took place in my life that led me back to teaching yoga at a retirement facility. As I started to teach again, I saw the benefits of yoga not only for my students, but for myself. I decided to get my yoga teacher training certification. It was the most wonderful educational and personal experience. I had more people asking me to teach and Yoga Illuminations was born. Yoga Illuminations: To illuminate ones life and oneself through the practice of yoga. I feel that it has been my destiny to teach yoga.

Why would you recommend Yoga to others?

I would recommend yoga to anyone regardless of age. There has been a lot of research and observations done especially in the past few years and the benefits are many.



In your opinion, is Yoga a trend that will come and go?

Yoga is an ancient practice of many types and forms. It is not likely that it will just die off as a trend, it just stands to evolve. There are many types of yoga: physical, mental and spiritual. There are many styles of hatha yoga (physical kind) that may tend to evolve and change as time goes on, but hatha yoga, regardless of the type of yoga, still uses the practice of the same asanas (postures).

What type of Yoga do you teach and why?

I teach adaptive and therapeutic yoga. With my background as a therapeutic recreation specialist this is of much interest to me. I also love to teach and practice Vinyasa Flow as well. The flow of sequenced asanas with combination of breath and movement is very powerful and enlightening. I don't like to say that I teach a particular style of yoga because all physical yoga comes from hatha yoga (the sun and the moon) and I tend to take what I have learned from all forms including Anusara yoga (focus on alignment) and Prana Yoga to incorporate everything in my classes.

What are the differences between Yoga and Bikram Yoga? (Besides the temperature of the room)

My teacher once said that the yoga you do on the mat is only 12.5 percent of what yoga is. The rest is what you practice off the mat e.g. Life. Yoga is a way of life. There are many styles of yoga on the mat - physical (Hatha) or Bikram. Not one [type] is necessarily rated for any reason, [it is] just what one's preference is for practice. Then there are many other types of yoga besides the Hatha, there is Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga, Kundalini yoga, Pranayama yoga, Tantra yoga, Jnana yoga just to name a few. You can spend a lifetime studying and just barely know a fraction of all there is.



Tell us something about Yoga that we would be surprised to know.

I don't know if there is anything that is surprising about yoga. The practice of yoga is practice of living and life is full of surprises. On the mat, however, every practice is a surprise; that goes to say that yoga truly is the union of the mind, body and spiritual self of one at work. I must say though that I have observed that through the practice of yoga, something happens that makes one more aware of themselves and others. The practice of yoga brings more awareness, focus and control to oneself.

What is the biggest misconception about Yoga?

The biggest misconception of yoga is that it is a fad, you have to be flexible to begin with to be able to practice yoga, it is a cult, it is all chanting and meditation, you have to be a vegetarian, you have to be a "tree hugger," it is not physically challenging enough. It is just all about stretching.

How can one expect their body and mind to change once starting Yoga?

Meditation is a part of yoga practice. Once again, there are many types of meditation practices like breath meditation, sound and music meditation, visualization, candle meditation, mantra meditation, gong meditation, silent meditation, etc.

Best Places for Yoga in the Valley:

- **North Scottsdale:** *Yoga Illuminations*, Phone: 602-568-4703 Email: yogailluminations@cox.net
- **Phoenix:** *Just Breathe*, 828 North 2nd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004, Phone: 602-256-1400, www.justbreathewellness.com
- **Chandler:** *Joyful Yoga Studio*, 3900 West Ray Road #4, Chandler, AZ Phone: 480-726-6399, www.joyfuleyogastudio.com
- **Valley-wide:** *At One Yoga*, www.atoneyoga.com
- **Valley-wide:** *Bikram Yoga*, www.bikramyogaphoenix.com