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Getting to know your healthcare professional

Five questions with: Bonnie Yonker of The Yoga Sanctuary

The instructors offer a unique blend of Hatha Yoga classes — for the brand new beginner to the long time yogi. Classes use asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), and meditation in order to balance your sun (ha) and moon (tha) qualities. — The Yoga Sanctuary Web site, theyogasanctuary.biz

1 started How did doing you get Yoga?

I first discovered yoga while attending Boston University 16 years ago. In 1998, while trekking in Nepal, an opportunity presented itself to live in an ashram for two weeks observing pure silence. This experience reignited my spirit and clarified my journey in life. Upon returning from Nepal in 1999, I discovered Yogiraj Alan Finger in New York City. I continued to study under his guidance and got certified to teach with Alan Finger in 2003. Upon moving to Punta Gorda in the summer of 2003, I started to fulfill my dream of sharing my passion of yoga by teaching classes throughout Charlotte County, eventually opening The Yoga Sanctuary in 2007. ality of the practitioner. Each posture is adapted to the individuals' body. There is no "perfect" posture but what is perfect for the individual at that moment. My teaching style is both energetic and meditative, challenging the mind and body by focusing on their connection through the breath. I also teach Ashtanga Yoga which is a more vigorous flowing sequence of poses, synchronized with the breath.

3 What misconception is the biggest that people have about yoga?

The biggest misconception that most people have is that they need to be able to "touch their toes" in order to practice yoga. This is not true. Those that are most inflexible usually benefit more from the practice initially. Every posture is adapted to the individual. Another misconception that I often hear is that "I am too old to begin now." Yoga does not know age. At our studio we offer many different types of classes

2you What teach style ? of yoga do

I currently teach all levels of yoga both at the group and individual level. The style of yoga that I teach is called ISHTA yoga which recognizes the individuso that all students feel comfortable. Our students range in age from 6-84 years old.

4students What do your say has been the greatest benefit of Yoga for them?

What I hear most often is that students begin to notice improvements in other areas of their life once they begin yoga. For example, their tennis game improves, work becomes more manageable, and stressful situations are handled with ease.

5recent What explains acceptance the of Yoga as recommended therapy by the medical community of Southwest Florida?

More and more, we are noticing that doctors are recommending yoga to their patients most often for: handling the symptoms of menopause, rehabilitation from surgery, management of low back pain, and most importantly as a means of reducing stress. I work with a wide array of students suffering from various illnesses that have been

encouraged to undertake a practice of yoga as a complementary form of healing. I teach students with MS, Parkinsons, paraplegics, cancer patients, and with total hip or knee replacements.

One of my students was given a stark choice by his doctor 10 years ago, either practice yoga daily or undergo back surgery. He chose yoga and has never looked back. In the past, the benefits were never tested, it was only theory. Today medical research is proving and documenting the benefits of yoga. As a result, we are also seeing more doctors themselves coming to the studio to reap the many benefits of Yoga. Their participation really illustrates the acceptance of Yoga in the medical community.

Bonnie Yonker is the owner of The Yoga Sanctuary in Punta Gorda. For more information, call 941-505-9642 or e-mail: bonnie@theyogasanctuary.biz

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