

# The Yoga Sanctuary

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**O**n a tree-lined street on the fringe of downtown Punta Gorda, there exists a place that breathes life and comfort and peace into all those who pass through the front doors. It is a retreat for the tired, those with achy bones, the stressed-out, and the mentally drained.

## Welcome to The Yoga Sanctuary

In May 2007, founder Bonnie Yonker, greeted students and visitors to Punta Gorda's first yoga center. The Yoga Sanctuary is a safe, friendly microcosm infused with euphonious music in a Feng Shui environment. Here, you will be transported on an inner adventure

designed to dissolve your stress, stretch your body, and calm your mind. Bonnie is your guide to an oasis isolated from the daily grind.

## A Green Environment

The Yoga Sanctuary is an eco-friendly microcosm. The front windows flood the studio with natural lighting. The tea station is stocked with organic teas. The colors that enhance The Yoga Sanctuary are reflective of the sun and earth.

During the interior design process, Bonnie was a stickler for maintaining green principles. Accordingly, the studio is decorated with products and materials that do not harm the environment. The reception area features bamboo flooring and IKEA furniture. The studio floor is covered in cork because it is the softest and warmest of non-carpet, natural options. The walls are painted with non-VOC (volatile organic compounds) and odor-free paint. Moreover, she uses all natural cleaning products, recycled paper, and biodegradable mats.

## Bonnie's Journey

Bonnie Yonker began her exploration of yoga in 1993. Over the next five years, she studied the philosophy informally until a 1998 trekking trip to South Asia ignited a deeper passion that furthered her learning process. That is when she grabbed an opportunity to live in an ashram in Nepal. (An ashram is the principal home of a yogi or guru and spiritual retreat for the resident followers.) This poignant experience inspired Bonnie to complete the intensive Be Yoga ISHTA Teacher Training in New York in 2003.

Bonnie teaches the ISHTA form of yoga that is an acronymic word derived from Sanskrit meaning 'personalized', or 'individualized'. ISHTA embraces elements from a variety of yoga styles. Each student develops their own personalized blend of postures, breathing, and meditation techniques to bring out their fullest potential.

Teaching yoga is a natural extension of Bonnie's life experiences. She has traveled around the world teaching the English language to people of all nationalities and cultures. At her studio, she offers





group and private classes in classic yoga, breathing exercises and meditation. “The focus,” Bonnie explains, “is on breathing new energy into the body to refresh and rejuvenate.” There are energetic as well as meditative workshops that concentrate on breathing.

### The Science of Yoga

There is a lot more to yoga than twisting the human body into a pretzel. It incorporates various physical postures or poses, each of which provides amazing physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. Yoga is a personal discovery process so Bonnie heartens students to challenge their body and mind. “You will learn to stretch tight areas, strengthen weak areas to bring the mind and the body into harmony.”

The primary goal of the Yoga Sanctuary is to empower students, allowing them to feel and experience self-acceptance, outer strength, and inner calm. Bonnie emphasizes breathing to release stress and improve concentration. The life lessons she teaches while “on the mat” applies to time off the mat.

It is often challenging and intimidating to enter a yoga class when you are limited due to injury or illness. For those who suffer from chronic pain, injuries, or even sleeping problems, yoga grants the individual more control over their life. Bonnie encourages her students to think beyond conventional boundaries and embrace the world no matter where they are personally, mentally, physically or spiritually.

Although many classes at the Yoga Sanctuary place the emphasis on stretching and postures, students can also choose to go deeper and explore the spiritual side of yoga practices. The fundamental message that Bonnie weaves into her teaching is that yoga is not just about the physical body. Yoga is also a quest for insight and clarity, and peace on a higher level.

The Yoga Sanctuary also offers therapeutic Thai Yoga massage which incorporates invigorating stretches and acupressure into the session. The bodywork helps relieve back pain, arthritis, headaches, digestive problems, and stress.

Bonnie Yonker is registered with the Yoga Alliance and is an active member of the International Yoga

Association. Call or visit the Yoga Sanctuary. Make yoga a part of your life. **ess**

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